AN ADDRESS

TO THE

GOOD SENSE AND CANDOUR

OF THE

PEOPLE,

IN BEHALF OF

THE DEALERS IN CORN:

WITH

SOME FEW OBSERVATIONS ON A LATE

TRIAL FOR REGRATING.

By a Country Gentleman.

"Clamour is not Reaſon—
"Aſſertion Fact—nor Accuſation Guilt."

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ERRATA.

In page 67, line 19, for *praying* read *preying*.
92, line 18, erase the word *not*.
141, line 5, for *respondent* read *respondeat*.
142, line the last, for *repeatly* read *repeatedly*.

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An ADDRESS, &c. &c.

THE ſenſeleſs, but alarming out-cry, which has been echoed through the country within theſe laſt few months, againſt a certain deſcription of perſons; and the fatal conſequences, which in my apprehenſion may ariſe from a continuance of the ſame unfounded clamour, have induced me to employ that portion of time I can ill ſpare, in an addreſs to the common ſenſe of the *public*, on a ſubject juſtly intereſting to all, inaſmuch as the Evil complained of, is more or leſs ſenſibly felt by every individual in the community.

The Scarcity of Corn, (and conſequent high price of bread,) has, in every period of hiſtory, and in all countries, been the grand and ſucceſsful rallying point for ſedition and villainy; from thoſe who look to a revolution in government, to thoſe whoſe ſole objects are plunder and devaſtation. Any thing which can add to the pretence of outrage, by furniſhing an object on which to wreak their vengeance, provides a wonderful auxiliary to the profligate and deſigning. The aid too,

which they receive from public ſentiment, is prodigious. When that ſentiment has once committed a body of men to the indignation of the people for the real or ſuppoſed offence of any individual in that body, the mob are conſidered as vindicating the cauſe of the injured *public*; and if theſe lawleſs outragers meet not the open ſupport, they ſcarcely want the countenance, and witneſs the forbearance of thoſe, who conſider as meritorious, or at leaſt as excuſable acts, the breaking of the windows, the deſtruction of the reſidence, and the plundering of the property of thoſe who are ſo unfortunate as to deal in an article, the price of which is from any cauſe (however independent of them) become dear. It is not till their exceſſes diſgrace the moſt abandoned, and that their manifeſt object is plunder and riot, that the well-meaning deſert their banners, and are aſhamed of their cauſe; convinced by ſad experience (yet frequently too late) of a truth, which never can be too forcibly impreſſed on the mind of man: "That the reſort for political redreſs of any grievance, to the efforts of a mob, is the moſt certain way of increaſing, inſtead of diminiſhing, the evil complained of."

If an axiom ſo ſelf-evident had wanted ſupport, in the events of the laſt week it would have found it, when the peace of the metropolis was for five nights diſturbed by a mob, originally excited by the empty but dangerous clamours againſt the Dealers in Corn, and degenerating hourly into an unprincipled

unprincipled, though (in numbers) inconſiderable, hord of thieves and pickpockets, joyful to embrace every pretext which would allow them to commit openly thoſe depredations on the property of their fellow creatures, which in ſecret is their nightly occupation.

The terror they occaſioned, and the inſults they inflicted on unoffending individuals, had nearly ſhut up for an inſtant the ſources from whence flow the daily ſuſtenance of the metropolis. The manufacturers of Bread-Corn, in the neighbourhood of London, alarmed for the ſafety of their perſons and property, fled from the market and with-held their accuſtomed ſupply. Providentially however, the arrival of 10,000 barrels of flour from America relieved the dreadful chaſm, which the folly and wickedneſs of the multitude had well nigh occaſioned. No one can reflect without horror, on the conſequence of even one day's interruption in the ſupply of bread for this immenſe city, and but for this circumſtance, in all probability the caſe would have happened.

That a mob of this deſcription ſhould have been ſo long ſuffered to diſturb the public tranquillity, and to hold out the alarming encouragement it did to other great cities, too ready, by report, to catch the ſignal of tumult, has excited conſiderable aſtoniſhment, and ſome degree of cenſure on the magiſtracy. The continued lenient conduct of the chief magiſtrate has been arraigned, and his con-

duct has undergone that ſevere (and perhaps unfair) degree of ſcrutiny, from which no high ſituation in trying times is exempt. We muſt conſider however, the delicate ſituation of the magiſtrate of a city like this in times of popular tumult, and how impoſſible it is by a conduct the moſt conſcientiouſly correct to give univerſal ſatisfaction. However generally the opinion may have been, that with a mob ſo compoſed, no argument but force could be of avail, and that the employing of it would have reſtored, in a few hours, peace to the city; yet when we reflect on the active perſonal zeal and unremitting attention of the chief magiſtrate on this occaſion, it is but juſtice to ſuppoſe, that he had ample and ſufficient reaſon for adopting a different line of conduct, and for with-holding the exerciſe of that power entruſted to him.

But the buſineſs of this addreſs is not with mobs. Weak, indeed, muſt be the power of that government, which cannot protect its ſubjects againſt open violence; which is not powerful enough to reſtrain the brutal hand of lawleſs fury, when raiſed againſt the valuable, and uſeful members, by whoſe induſtry it is ſupported. The contributions which every man pays to the ſtate, are the price of his protection. If you deny it him, you looſen one of the ſtrongeſt ties, which unite him to you; he has a right to demand it, and you cannot reject his claim. But it is not only from

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open violence that the public have reaſon to be apprehenſive, or that it has a right to aſk the watchful eye, and if neceſſary, the interpoſing hand of government. The public peace may be endangered by public prejudice; the minds of the people may become ſeriouſly tainted by the diſſemination of even unfounded (if uncontradicted) aſſertion. The paſſions of mankind are eaſily rouſed, on ſubjects, where their intereſt is concerned. The mere repetition of charges too unfeeling to deſerve, and too contemptible to obtain a reply, make in time an impreſſion, which pages of ſound argument and cool diſcuſſion can hardly remove. The conſtant friction of a drop in time penetrates the hardeſt bodies. The repeated inſinuations of the groſſeſt ignorance and moſt apparent malice, if unnoticed, find their way to the public ear, and frequently affect its judgment; for nothing can be too abſurd and malicious to liſten to, if not to believe. We are not very apt to examine too nicely into the probability of the truth of a report. It is generally conſidered as amply ſufficient to juſtify our belief, that the thing has been reported without contradiction.

If this were not almoſt univerſally the caſe, how are we to account for the ſenſeleſs clamours which have reſounded through every ſtreet of the metropolis, and through every market town of the kingdom, againſt the dealers in the Corn Trade? to whoſe wicked aim of diſtreſſing the

community

the community, is attributed the high price of the article. Were we to believe the nonſenſe, which meets your ear on this ſubject, we muſt believe, that every warehouſe which ſkirts the Thames, from Chelſea to Blackwall, is only one immenſe magazine of Grain hoarded up by the inſatiable avarice of theſe Gigantic Monopoliſts, who not content with the exorbitant price of the day, have entered into a combination to prey ſtill further on the public wants. If we are to give credit to all the abſurd ſtories in circulation, of Merchants who deſtroy their Corn, of Mealmen, who ſink their Flour, and of Farmers, who throw their Wheat into Rivers; all which they have hoarded up till it has become ſpoiled; whilſt we muſt look with aſtoniſhment at their folly, we cannot but allow, that *if theſe things are ſo*, the public have good reaſon for complaint.

Ideas like theſe, propagated throughout the country, by wickedneſs or ignorance, or by both, muſt of themſelves have the effect of ſouring the public mind, and of exaſperating it againſt the perſons ſo miſrepreſented; but when theſe opinions receive the public ſanction of thoſe to whom we are accuſtomed on all occaſions to look up, as Polar Stars, to direct our judgment on points where prejudice may lead us aſtray—if the reſpectable guardians of the laws, to whoſe pure and able hands are committed the lives, the liberties and property of the people, encourage this dangerous

prejudice,

prejudice, one can ſcarcely wonder at its wide-ſpreading influence, or its alarming increaſe. In the addreſs of a counſel to a jury, I can allow of an appeal to their paſſions and prejudices. It is his duty to make the beſt of his cauſe for his client, and if it has no real ground of ſupport, to prop up its tottering frame, by the beſt materials he can bring to its aid; the abuſe of the individual, and of the claſs to which he belongs, is, in ſuch a cauſe, no weak aſſiſtant. When the ſubject of addreſs is that in which the loweſt orders of the people are moſt intereſted, I can even allow to the declining popularity of a patriot counſel, the aſſiſtance he may derive in his addreſs to the jury, from mixing the cauſe of the people with that of his client. Such tricks are too common, and too eaſily ſeen through, to excite more than a ſmile. The impreſſion they make even on the contracted ſphere within their influence, is juſt what they deſerve; the morrow finds them forgotten by all, even by the counſel himſelf.

Far different is the awful and impreſſive addreſs, which flows from the ſeat of judgment. The reſpect ſo juſtly due to the venerable ſages of the law, who preſide in the high courts of judicature, is no where more ſincerely felt, than amongſt thoſe country gentlemen who fill the office of grand jurors. Every word that falls from the bench, is liſtened to with attention, and by many conſidered as irreſiſtible. They are ſenſible that the

the charge is not the production of the moment, or an impreſſion made on the mind of a judge by a ſuperficial view of the ſubject; they know and feel that it is the reſult of an attentive conſideration of thoſe topics deemed moſt proper to engage the attention of his auditors, and under a conſciouſneſs that he is addreſſing men of enlarged minds, and of general information.

How careful then ought every man to be, who is placed in this high and moſt reſponſible ſituation: where every word that falls from him gives a direction to public ſentiment, and influences the opinion and conduct, not only of thoſe within his hearing, but of thouſands to whom his opinions are communicated, and frequently without the ſtricteſt regard to truth, in a manner beſt ſuited to the views of the relator.—It is not the grand jury only who liſten to the addreſs—all the mixed claſſes of ſociety, whom curioſity or buſineſs call to an aſſize town, are within the immediate vortex of its influence. To a great part of them, a ſubject diſcuſſed in the manner this has been, is ſure to excite their attention, becauſe it accords completely with their prejudices and paſſions. When the attention of the jury throughout a circuit is peculiarly directed againſt engroſſers, foreſtallers, and regrators; when they are told that theſe men are, in a great meaſure, the cauſe of the high price of proviſions; when they are encouraged to bring ſuch offenders to ſpeedy juſtice, as

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the certain means of relieving the poor from the preſſure of the times; and information detailed (in a manner which might appear ſomewhat in the ſpirit of exultation) of the conviction of one monopoliſt in a diſtant county, as a proof of the wickedneſs of the times, and of the poſſibility of bringing theſe crimes to juſtice—When theſe and ſimilar incitements are held out to popular reſentment, what man can doubt the immediate effect produced by language flowing from authority ſo reverenced? Will there be a man who hears the addreſs, from the grand juror in his box to the javelin man at the door, who does not in a greater or leſs degree imbibe a ſpirit of reſentment againſt the ſuppoſed offenders; or an increaſe of that prejudice which his mind has already admitted? Will the majority carry leſs out of court than a thorough conviction, that the bread they eat, owes its high price to the iniquity of thoſe hands through which it paſſes to them? Will not many of them, on a ſubject, where the diſcrimination of thoſe characters and claſſes, who can, by poſſibility, be guilty of theſe crimes, requires that which prejudice never gives—reaſon and conſideration—transfer that cenſure and thoſe reproaches, which the Bench could not mean as generally applicable to any body of men, conſidered in the aggregate, to every claſs connected with that buſineſs, which ſupplies the wants of mankind, to almoſt every individual unfortunately concerned at this moment in the corn trade? Will they not de-

part to their homes fully ſatisfied, that every dealer in corn, is an "Harpy, fattening on the life-blood of the people;" a mercileſs vulture preying on the half famiſhed carcaſes of his fellow creatures; and that the whole trade is a ſyſtem of extortion and rapine, founded on avarice the moſt inſatiable, and leading to conſequences the moſt fatal to the well-being and happineſs of ſociety?

I love and eſteem the characters of thoſe who fill with ſo much credit to themſelves and advantage to the public, the important office of judges in this country. The talents they bring to the public ſtock, form the leaſt part of their claim to public gratitude. The virtue which illumines their minds, the examples of probity and honour they hold out to mankind, the unwearied attention they give to the various duties of their high ſtation, and the purity of the motives of all their conduct, apparent in their deciſions and opinions, (even where we cannot ſubſcribe to the opinions themſelves) claim the grateful approbation of every man who wiſhes well to ſociety. I ſhould grieve indeed to be ſuſpected of a wiſh to tarniſh their well-earned laurels, or to diminiſh that reverence we muſt all feel for every individual member of that venerable body. Happy indeed is the country which entruſts to ſuch pure and able hands the adminiſtration of its laws! I would not leſſen but increaſe the reſpect I conſider them ſo juſtly entitled to, if that were poſſible or neceſſary; yet I muſt be forgiven,

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if whilſt I bear teſtimony to the excellence of all their motives, I tremble for the effect (becauſe I ſee the danger) of their opinions in matters where profeſſional knowledge, or great talents are not abſolute requiſites. I truſt they will pardon me, that I conceive it poſſible for prejudice to find its way even to their hallowed ſeats; to attack with ſucceſs minds ſtrong in wiſdom, experience and goodneſs; and to diveſt them for a moment of the exerciſe of that reaſon and reflection, the uſual prominent and moſt valuable features of all their deciſions and opinions.

It has been ſaid by a writer, who ſeems to have a thorough knowledge of the human heart, "that the wiſeſt and beſt of men are occaſionally under the influence of prejudice;" perhaps it is no leſs true, that prejudice is ſtrengthened, and takes more hold on the mind, in proportion to the purity and benevolence of its motives. It has an honourable foundation to work upon, and it makes the moſt of it. Where the intereſts of individuals are alone concerned, whilſt we may lament the error, we are not called upon to interfere; the partial evil is too limited for public notice. But when the peace and welfare of ſociety is endangered by it; when prejudice has fixed its deadly fangs on a large and valuable portion of the community, when in this inſtance it holds them up to the public deteſtation and abhorrence of the country, (already too prone to think ill of them) and promiſcuouſly

brands every claſs of them in their turn, if not with the direct charge of monopoly, with inſinuations equally ſevere, and more cruel, (and this becauſe one man has been convicted of re-ſelling 30 quarters of oats, and another of buying 1000 pockets of hops) it is ſurely time to take this monſter by the throat—to ſtop at leaſt its further ravages; leſt in time it devour the common ſenſe, and with it deſtroy the peace and happineſs of the country. It is time to lay aſide, for an inſtant, the reſpect due to names and authorities, and to examine their opinions; to call on the ſober judgments of thoſe who have been led away by high authority or vulgar prejudice, to pauſe one moment before they rejoin the popular cry; to be ſatisfied, before they diſſeminate the doctrines and opinions to which they have been converts, that if they cannot bring facts to their ſupport, they can at leaſt bring a conſiderable degree of probability.

Let no one imagine that the danger of promulgating opinions of this nature, is merely viſionary: look at the baneful effects which have been produced generally through the kingdom, ſince theſe opinions have made any progreſs: look to the alarming outrages inflicted on theſe objects of public vengeance; at the riots and tumults which have diſgraced great part of the kingdom, and which have, in ſome inſtances, for a lengthened period ſet at defiance the civil power. No one who obſerved the conduct, or attended to the language of theſe per-

perſons, can doubt but they have ſheltered their outrages on the perſons and property of individuals, under the protection of the high authorities I have mentioned. They have conſidered theſe noble perſons, as tolerating if not encouraging the oſtenſible motives of their violence, and *their* opinions have been the ſhield under which they have covered their wanton exceſſes; nor are theſe effects new; the ſame cauſes have invariably produced them. In every inſtance where the public mind has been directed by high authority to the conſideration of any public grievance, ſuppoſed to be occaſioned or increaſed by the miſconduct of a particular body of men, the conſequence has been always ſimilar. The recollection of moſt men, and the reading of all, will furniſh many inſtances.—Why ſhould we expect a different effect in this caſe? Every man is intereſted in the price of the quartern loaf; but it is not every man who troubles himſelf about a particular ſyſtem of religion, or a peculiar mode of recruiting.

The event has been conſiſtent with reaſon and experience. The influence of judicial opinion on this ſubject has taken a moſt extenſive range. It is to be found in the numerous advertiſements which fill the daily papers—it is to be collected from the calls for ſubſcriptions to proſecute miſdemeanors of the nature I have alluded to—it is to be ſeen in the reſolutions of corporate bodies—in the engagements of reſpectable but deluded individuals—it forms the

converſation of all companies—it is to be met with in every ſtreet, and you run againſt it at every corner—even the uninhabited houſes of the metropolis and its vicinity—the mutilated walls and rotten paling which ſurround the unfiniſhed building—all proclaim the influence of this ſentiment, in the pictures of miſerable bakers and mealmen diſhonorably ſuſpended; and in the groſs but pithy ſentences with which they are crowded of "No hoarders—no grinders of the poor—Lord Kenyon, and down with the mealmen;" all indicative of the feelings of the lower claſſes towards thoſe who deal in this neceſſary article of life, borrowed indeed from their betters, who all and each of them conſider, and proclaim it as a principle not to be controverted, *that* the *practice of monopoly has arrived at an alarming height, and that to it, and its attendant crimes* are to *be attributed the high price of all the articles of life!* and all of them, by their language, exciting the public clamour againſt, and calling on the public purſe to proſecute (I had nearly ſaid perſecute) theſe wealthy, unfeeling, avaricious monopoliſts.

Is there a man in the country who does not apprehend danger from this clamour, even if well-founded? and who does not bluſh for the injuſtice of his country, if unfounded? Are we all prepared to convict a numerous body of our fellow-creatures, without examining the grounds of their accuſation, or the circumſtances of their defence? Is every thing to be ſurrendered to prejudice,

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and nothing conceded to reaſon? Is the torrent to be left to exhauſt itſelf? Is no oppoſition to be given it? Beware that it does not in its unreſtrained progreſs break down the mounds which public peace has deemed neceſſary to conſtruct for its ſecurity. If you do not now exert yourſelves, in vain will you hereafter call to your aid the calm, and modeſt voice of reaſon; its cries will be drowned in the tumult of lawleſs outrage and unmeaning clamour. If Sedition has once raiſed her banners, in vain may you appeal to Reaſon—ſhe will not be liſtened to.

I believe it to be the duty of every man who thinks as I do on this ſubject, to ſtand forward, unappalled by the conſideration of the (deſervedly) great weight with the public, of thoſe whoſe opinions I am reſiſting. Let it be remembered that high character and ſtation give no ſanctity to prejudice. If in its effects, it is likely to become dangerous to the public ſafety; when ſupported by high name, or rank, it becomes more ſo; and conſequently the duty of reſiſting it is increaſed. I truſt that I ſhall be able to ſatisfy my readers, that the reſiſtance I offer to theſe dangerous and unfounded opinions, has ſome reaſon and truth for its baſis. If I can ſhew to the ſatisfaction of thoſe who are willing to hear reaſon, that the propoſition advanced from high authority, and ſo confidently maintained by others, viz. *that the ſcarcity of proviſion is* chiefly *owing to Monopoly*, is (at leaſt as to one great and only neceſſary article of life) as unfounded

founded in fact, as it is dangerous in diſſemination, I truſt no one will blame my preſumption, or accuſe me of indiſcretion.

The limits of a pamphlet will not allow me to extend my enquiries through the different articles of proviſions, the high price of which forms the ſubject of public complaint. I beg to be conſidered, however, as applying the ſame principle of reaſoning to all, and to contend that *monopoly is not the cauſe of the high price.*

I ſhall confine my obſervations in this addreſs to that great and important article, Bread Corn; which, as the ſtaff of life, neceſſarily in times of ſcarcity alarms all ranks of people, and more than any other article ſtimulates the vengeance of the lower orders againſt thoſe men, who are pointed out to them, as contributing by their conduct, to increaſe that ſcarcity. In ſuch times, the hackneyed terms of monopolizers, foreſtallers, and regraters, are applied each in their turn, with equal meaning, as truth—to the man who rents a large farm—to him who buys the produce of it, be he the corn factor, the jobber, or the chandler—to the miller who grinds it—and even to the flour factor who diſpoſes of the meal—and to the baker, who converts it into food. To them we may add in theſe times of immenſe importation, as perſons equally endangered by ſuch clamour, the merchant who imports, the lighterman who lands, and the warehouſeman who furniſhes room for the commodity.

Every

Every one of theſe claſſes, indeed every man who is in the habit of dealing in corn, of any nature, or to any extent, are all and each of them at the moment in which I write, liable from the encouraged prejudice of the times, to become in their turn the objects of public vengeance. The ſevere and unfounded charges brought againſt the whole trade, however they may be ſeparated by ſome, and in their application confined to particular branches of it, are not ſo diſtinguiſhed by the bulk of the people. From that quarter where the danger is moſt to be apprehended, the diſtinction exiſts not. To deal in corn, is with them the conviction of guilt, and the gradations of it are not likely to be inveſtigated or attended to, by thoſe, who merely uſe the accuſation, as a cloak to cover the depravity of their views, be they ſedition or plunder.

Let us then examine diſpaſſionately and coolly, whether theſe broad and ſerious charges can be affixed with any appearance of reaſon, and juſtice, to all, or any of the individuals, who are preſented to us at this moment by popular prejudice, as delinquents. Let me call the attention of every man in the community, whatever may be his ſtation, to go along with me in this examination, to exerciſe their reaſon and judgment, on a ſubject to which not only the common juſtice we owe accuſed perſons claims our attention; but the intereſt we muſt all feel in the preſervation of the public peace,

and in the ſuppreſſion of that alarming outcry, which, if not ſpeedily ſtifled, may lead, under the much to be lamented encouragement it has received, not only to partial tumult and commotion, but even to civil war.

I am truly ſenſible how difficult is the taſk to prove a negative. I cannot promiſe that impoſſibility; my candid readers will not conſider my defence as incomplete, becauſe it needs this impoſſible requiſite. All that they will expect from me, is that, I ſhould oppoſe facts to aſſertion in all caſes that admit of it; that where ſtatements can be contradicted by authorities, I ſhould adduce them; they will not give implicit credit to alledged miſconduct, where the motives were evidently inſufficient to produce it, and they will not violate probability, by admitting without examination, charges ſo general in their nature, and ſo imbecile in their proofs, as to enſure acquittal were the ſubject any other than it is.

If I am able to convince even a few honourable characters, who have been ſeduced by the prejudice of the day to join in the miſtaken clamour againſt this injured claſs of people; if I ſhall excite their talents and induſtry in undeceiving thoſe, who are led by their authority and influence, I ſhall conſider myſelf as not wholly unſucceſsful. But I hope to do more: I rely on the goodneſs of the cauſe I have engaged in—that of reſiſting unjuſt calumny—and I know the frank and ge-

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nerous (though haſty) temper of my countrymen too well, to believe that they will ſhut their ears againſt common ſenſe, whilſt they willingly and freely lend them to intereſted, unfounded clamour, or to miſtaken prejudice.

Before however, I attempt this, let me aſſure my readers, that I have no perſonal intereſt in this diſcuſſion. I have undertaken the cauſe of theſe perſons, without either ſolicitation or encouragement. In common with the reſt of the public, I have viewed with ſerious regret, and have experienced conſiderable inconvenience, from the high and increaſing price of every article of life. I have neither perſonal intereſt in, nor connection with any branch of the trade, whoſe cauſe I am pleading. I declare with the trueſt ſincerity, that a principle of juſtice, a regard to truth, and a warm intereſt in the conſiſtency and character of my countrymen, are my only motives.

In this enquiry, the firſt object which is preſented to our notice is the

FARMER;

and one ſhould ſcarcely have conceived it poſſible, at the cloſe of the eighteenth century—in a country, amongſt whoſe national characteriſtics a generous confidence by no means ſtands laſt; that a very large portion of the community can have nouriſhed for an inſtant, a ſuſpicion ſo unworthy

themſelves, and ſo miſapplied towards any material part of this reſpectable body, as a *combination to keep up the price of Corn.* Perhaps, if there ever was an inſtance of a term groſsly miſapplied, it is this of combination. It requires a very ſhort reſidence in the country, and very little obſervation of the manners and conduct of Farmers, to be ſatisfied, that there is no claſs of people ſo independent of each other, ſo unconnected in their dealings, or ſo little communicative to one another. If one requires proof of this, enquire amongſt the Farmers of any one village, who have gone with their ſamples to market; and you will find, that ſcarce any one knows, what price his neighbour has got for his article, and when known, it will be found, that ſcarcely any two have obtained a ſimilar price, even where the ſample was equal in goodneſs. If this is true, there can be no combination.

" But," ſay their accuſers, " if there is no actual combination, there is a tacit aſſent to keep back their Corn from market, by which the public ſuſtains an equal inconvenience; elſe why, after an harveſt unuſually productive, and generally well got in, this extreme ſcarcity, and conſequential high price?"

Without diſputing the premiſes (the diſcuſſion of which I ſhall decline for the preſent) I will concede, that the ſupply from the Farmer has been hitherto very ſcanty—from many there has been none. Can it be expected that it ſhould be otherwiſe?

wiſe? How can the Farmer, even at this time, (much leſs when the outcry firſt commenced againſt him) have any quantity of new wheat threſhed? Recollect that this clamour, and the riots, in conſequence of it, commenced in the northern parts of the kingdom, as far back as the 28th of Auguſt. What quantity of Corn could the Farmers have threſhed out at that time for the ſupply of the markets? The harveſt throughout England was ſcarcely half finiſhed, in many places only commenced. Of new wheat, therefore, little could have been in the country.

If the farmer had ſaved any old wheat, with the monſtrous price of 7*l.* per quarter, and with every reaſon to ſuppoſe that the harveſt would be well got in, and moſt productive, can any man ſeriouſly believe he would have kept it back from market? Could he have hoped at any future period to have got a better price? No one can ſay yes.—He would then have acted the part of a madman, to have kept back his old wheat, and of new he could have had no great quantity? How then was he to have ſupplied the markets?

But we are told, "That a few weeks earlier in the ſeaſon, the Wheat had fallen conſiderably? How then (ſay they) on the near approach of harveſt, with all the attendant favourable circumſtances, could it riſe to its former price, except by ſome unfair, improper means?"

I do not know that the Farmers ought to be called

called on at all times to account for the temporary fluctuation of markets; yet in this caſe, it will be no difficult matter to aſſign the probable cauſe of the riſe. At the period alluded to, the extreme heat of the weather, the excellent appearance of the Wheats in general, throughout the kingdom, and the great proſpect of an early harveſt, induced thoſe who had any old wheat by them (and who were very few in number) to carry it to market. There was no proſpect of an higher price; and the period of harveſt is that of general employment of the farmer's men and teams. The great importations of the ſpring and ſummer, (and much increaſed at that moment,) contributed to the depreſſion. By theſe means, the market, before ill ſupplied, became in ſome degree loaded; and the prices of all Corn experienced a ſudden, and moſt conſiderable fall. When on the contrary the proſpect of an early harveſt was clouded by unfavourable weather; when the Wheats were found in ſome parts blighted, and generally by no means anſwering the ſanguine expectations which had been indulged of their quality and produce; when, in addition to this, the importations began to decreaſe, and the exportations of Corn, coaſtways, and to Scotland (which uſed to ſupply the London market, inſtead of being ſupplied from it) increaſed wonderfully; theſe combined cauſes effected a riſe, as proportionably ſudden, as the fall had been—an indiſputable proof that the ſtock in

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hand of old wheat, whether Engliſh or foreign, was nearly exhauſted, and that we were at the moment depending on the new ſupply, which itſelf depended, as to the effect on the price of the market, on its being later or earlier.

It may however be agreed, that at this time, (29th of September) there can be no reaſon why the market ſhould not have been well ſupplied with wheat, it having been got in dry, and in a ſtate for threſhing, much ſuperior to a later period in common years: partially perhaps it might be ſo; but the general ſtate of the wheat harveſt throughout the kingdom, has not been ſuch as to warrant this concluſion. Concede, however, that it has; and what is the period we are talking of? the mob in Mark-lane aſſembled on the 15th of September; their avowed complaint was the high price of bread after an abundant harveſt. Taking the word *after* literally, it was incorrect, for in many of the midland and northern counties the wheat was not got in. We will ſuppoſe it was; is there no time to be allowed the farmer to threſh out his corn? The high price of the article was ſo tempting, and the proſpect of a decreaſe in it, after a few weeks, ſo certain, that he could want no other inducement to deviate from the common routine of his buſineſs. The price had generally this influence; the ſound of the flail might be heard in many barns, where its wheat uſually never met the floor till Chriſtmas was turned.

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The operations of a regular, induſtrious farmer, whoſe capital and ſtock are equal to his farm, are conducted on as regular and mechanical a ſyſtem, as that of any tradeſman. The ſeveral proceſſes of huſbandry are performed at ſtated times and ſeaſons. The autumn after he has houſed his corn, is appropriated to landing up, and ſowing his wheat fallows. The general opinion of a benefit from change of ſeed, together with an unwillingneſs to diſturb his wheat-rick, or his mow, induce him to purchaſe his ſeed-corn. The generality of farmers, of any tolerable opulence, ſeldom begin threſhing their wheat before the winter is ſet in. Excluſive of its interfering with other buſineſs, they think it yields better to the flail when it has had a little froſt; and in the months of October and November they threſh out their ſpring corn, to ſupply fodder for the yard, and materials for the malſter. If however, a moſt tempting price induces the farmer to abandon, for the moment, his accuſtomed track, and to diſturb the regular ſyſtem of his farm, he does it with reluctance. The extra-price he may obtain, is not conſidered by him as an adequate compenſation for being put out of his way, and for employing his men in the barn, or his teams on the road to market, by which he may be obliged to poſtpone his regular courſe of huſbandry. Beſides his obſervation founded on experience, tells him, that if wheat is dear in October, when neceſſity compels many to carry it to market,

market, it will not be cheap in February and March, when theſe ſources are drained, and ſevere weather may have checked importation; he knows and feels, that whatever he may have heard of monopoly being the cauſe; that the true and only definition of dearneſs, when applied to corn, is *ſcarcity*, and that it can have no other meaning. If however, he bites at the highly gilded bait, if apparently ſtrong intereſt induces him to deviate from his preſcribed line of conduct—if he avows that to be his only motive—his ſole inducement—can we reaſonably blame him? Is his trade the only one in which that ſentiment is to be baniſhed, or even not to be predominant? Is he alone to be actuated by a diſintereſted regard for the public intereſt, and under the preſſure of ſevere taxes, high rates, dearneſs of labour, advanced price of every article he has to buy, and not unfrequently of borrowed capital, to conſider ſolely the public good, and to utterly baniſh from his breaſt, the unfeeling, unnatural ſentiment of ſelf-intereſt?

But it fortunately happens, that whatever are his motives, the public intereſt is certain to be attended to: In any way in which (if he has common prudence) he *can* act, the public is benefited. If in the regular ſupply with which he feeds the market, at times, when others are exhauſted, he preſerves its equilibrium; he does no leſs ſo by withholding his grain when the markets are at a low price, and ſupplying them when the price is high. All his conduct

tends to the public advantage: unintentionally he is the trueſt friend of the country; his intereſt and that of the people go hand in-hand; nothing can ſeparate them, nothing but ignorance will believe it poſſible to divide them.

But a caſe may be put, ſay the clamorous, where the farmer has it in his power to raiſe the price on the public much beyond what the general ſcarcity warrants:—Suppoſe in a diſtrict where very large farms abound, in the time of the general greateſt ſcarcity from ſpring to harveſt, three or four farmers, of equal property, ſhould combine together to keep their wheat from the market, when the ſupply from the leſs opulent farmer was exhauſted, and the vicinage depended on their ſupply only; would not this combination raiſe the price of the article to an exorbitant height, and ſubject the neighbourhood to grievous injury?

This caſe I have heard put. I do not deny the poſſibility, I cannot prove the negative, but I muſt maintain that it is the extreme of poſſibility; I have before ſaid, that combination amongſt farmers, is a ſoleciſm in country language; but nevertheleſs the combination is poſſible. Men who have an innate jealouſy of each other, may ſtifle it for their intereſt, may act together with that confidence and agreement, as to keep ſecret a plan, which if once whiſpered abroad, would draw down the indignation of the neighbourhood againſt them, and would make them tremble for their ſtacks and barns. They

may

may keep back that corn, which the public diſtreſs loudly and imperiouſly calls for. The millers and other conſumers in their neighbourhood, may be for a while diſtreſſed for the article, and the price will advance. I ſay they *may* do all this; but it is the utmoſt they *can* do. The evil will be momentary, the diſtreſs of ſhort duration; the miller would go to another market, which this combination affected not, and he would find in the leſſer price of the article a compenſation for the extended carriage to his mill. If, however, wedded to his own market, he is compelled to give the price dictated to him, and that an exorbitant one, the evil will ſoon be remedied by the jobber or middle man, as he is called, who will find it worth his while to bring it from the lower to the higher market. It is true the neighbourhood will for a moment pay an higher price than they ought to do, even with this aſſiſtance; but that will be the extent of the evil, and will be only felt for an inſtant. The farmer will ſoon find it his intereſt to diſſolve the combination, and to pour his corn into the market at a price lower than the jobber can afford to do, (and perhaps lower than the average price of the country) in order to drive theſe people from the market, before they have furniſhed ſuch a ſupply as may render any addition unneceſſary, with the near proſpect of the public diſtreſs being relieved by the approaching harveſt. And that very diſtrict which laboured under a temporary ſcarcity

and dearneſs, may on the average of the year be ſupplied in conſequence of this combination, with a greater abundance, and conſequently at ſomewhat a leſs price than the country in general.

But whilſt I acknowledge the poſſibility of this caſe, I do not allow the exiſtence of it, much leſs can I be brought to believe, that which the reporters of it would have us, think, that this practice is general. I have never yet found one man amongſt the hundreds I have heard join in the abuſe of farmers, who pretended to ſay, that he could bring evidence to ſatisfy the minds of any twelve of the moſt credulous men that ever were impanelled, that ſuch a combination exiſted; and ſo polluted has the public mind been, by the nonſenſe which has been vomited forth for ſome time on the ſubject, that if ſuch proof could have been adduced, or the ſhadow of it, it would have been by this time on record. So fair an opportunity would not have been neglected; it would have ſerved to feed the raging folly of the moment; and the actors in the ſhameful ſcene would have ſoon been conſigned to public odium, and merited puniſhment.

Let me not however be thought to ſay, that there may not have been many individual farmers, who have kept up a few loads (and perhaps ſome their whole crop) beyond the uſual time of their general ſale of it. It may have been done from motives of intereſt, or poſſibly from caprice; his inducements may have been of the moſt weak or wicked nature;

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he may have taken it into his head, that by keeping it a little longer, he could metamorphoſe it into gold itſelf, and he therefore keeps up the article in his granary, as he would the gold in his cloſet. But has he not a right ſo to do? Shall he be told, that whilſt all his countrymen are protected in the unreſtrained diſpoſal of their property, at the time and in the manner moſt ſuited to their inclinations, he is to be fettered down by public prejudice, threatened in his perſon, and a price affixed on his property, for his non-compliance with the will of thoſe who have no right to dictate to him, and who if they had the right, and exerciſed it in the manner they ſeem inclined to do, would defeat the very end they mean to promote. If I have an horſe to ſell, and I find the fair over-loaded with horſes of the ſame deſcription, am I compelled to take the price that is offered me, though from the numbers there, it may be conſidered by others as a good one? If I ſend my goods to a general auction, am I compelled to take the price the company may chuſe to bid, and which from the many articles that may be put up at the ſame day, and even to a very crouded company, is conſidered as a fair one, and perhaps more than the article coſts me? If as a merchant, I am in poſſeſſion of a ſcarce and valuable article, for inſtance, ſalt-petre—I perceive the great demand for the article by government, and the preſſing neceſſity they have for it—I ſoon learn that the quantity in my poſſeſſion is, at the moment,

moment, ſuch as they will be put to great ſtraits to do without; that in fact an expedition, on which the eyes of Europe are fixed, and in which the whole civilized world is intereſted, may be delayed by my means. I do not chuſe to part with it, but at a moſt extravagant profit; I am not content with 50 per cent. nor with 100, I will have 200. Their wants compel them to give it me, they have exhauſted every ſource, and they come to me from neceſſity; and every man who contributes to the taxes of the country, contributes his proportion to ſatisfy my avarice, or (if you pleaſe) my unfair advantage.

Yet who arraigns the conduct of either of theſe three parties? Who abuſes their avarice, or who putting himſelf in their places, will ſay that they would not act the ſame; and yet horſes are an abſolutely neceſſary article; chairs and tables we cannot do without, and war cannot be carried on without ſaltpetre.

In vain will you ſay that theſe are not as neceſſary articles as bread; certainly they are not, none can be ſo much ſo, yet the principle of reaſoning is the ſame; let us however bring forward one article, which in theſe times approaches very nearly, in point of neceſſity, to bread: I mean ſugar; and here we need not argue hypothetically. Who at the cloſe of the laſt year, ſaid to the Weſt India merchant, whoſe ſugars filled almoſt every warehouſe uſed for ſuch goods in the metropolis, and not only

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loaded (even in one inſtance to the deſtruction of ſeveral houſes) the uninhabited buildings in every ſtreet of the metropolis, but thronged the very lanes and highways in the eaſtern extremity of the city, "You muſt ſell your ſugars at a fair price, ſuch as the manifeſt abundance of them warrants; you muſt not keep the article locked up, in hopes of ſelling it better—you have no right to procure loans from the bank, and acts of parliament from the legiſlature, to enable you to maintain the preſent high price of that which is ſo eſſentially neceſſary to the public, who have no right to be thus preyed upon by your avarice—the profit is quite ſufficient for you, and we will pull down your warehouſes, if you do not bring it to market."

And yet all this might have been ſaid, certainly with equal, and perhaps with greater reaſon; becauſe in this caſe, the merchants themſelves did not pretend ſcarcity—the rate of their ſpeculations only could not afford a diminiſhed price. But the public (though if ever they witneſſed monopoly, it was in this inſtance, and that not concealed but avowed monopoly) interfered not.

They reaſoned wiſely; they conſidered as a fundamental principle of liberty, the right which every man has to diſpoſe of his property as he chuſes, and the ſound wiſdom of permitting him ſo to do; they knew that the exerciſe of the power to abuſe that right, would be partial in its effects, and momentary

tary in its duration—the interfering with that right productive of general and laſting evil.

And is not the ſame meaſure to be meted out to the farmer.—Is the mere circumſtance of a greater neceſſity for his goods, to be conſidered, as juſtifying the violation of a principle, ſo wiſely and juſtly conſidered as not to be departed from; and on which, in a great meaſure, has been founded the commercial greatneſs and proſperity of this immenſe empire? I cannot waſte another argument on the injuſtice of the reſtraint.

But in this inſtance the folly is not leſs apparent. The very retention of the article is nine times out of ten a moſt important advantage to the country; for ſuch a practice cannot be general. Smallneſs of capital—temptation as to price——regularity of ſyſtem—injury from vermin, and natural waſte from keeping—all unite to bring to market the produce of farmers at the uſual time. Often indeed does the public ſuſtain a material loſs from the farmers, who want money for other purpoſes, bringing their corn to market, which has been threſhed out, before it was ſufficiently dry to yield either to the flail or the grindſtone its full and mature product. No one can doubt this who looks at the ſtraw that is threſhed at the early part of the ſeaſon, when the harveſt has not been a dry one. The ſwarms of poultry, which inſtantly aſſemble, and make their meal from even the refuſe that

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is ſcattered in getting the ſtraw into the loft, proclaim loudly the injury which the public has ſuſtained from the early and premature threſhing out the corn.—I have no doubt (and I ſpeak here from experiment) that there is ſcarcely a load of ſtraw which comes to the London market before the month of February, out of which at the leaſt half a peck of wheat might not be obtained, and from ſome a conſiderably larger quantity. The man, therefore, who keeps his corn back till the ear yields its full and mature product, who ſupplies you with wheat, when you cannot get it elſewhere, and who feeds the market when the ſtores of his neighbours are exhauſted, whatever may be his motives, renders a moſt eſſential ſervice to the country. You may call him a monopoliſt, but to the kind of monopoly he has been guilty of (the keeping his own property till he chuſes to diſpoſe of it) do you, perhaps, owe thoſe retrenchments in conſumption you have made, and by which you have averted the dreadful evils of famine. You know not your obligations to this man whom you are trying to injure by unjuſt inſinuations, which if he is fooliſh enough to regard, you will inevitably be *ſtarved*.

I have conſidered this charge of monopoly as intended to be applied ſolely to the great farmer; it is impoſſible to believe that it is meant to comprize the *little* farmer; who amongſt the various claſſes into which it has pleaſed the Almighty to diſtribute

his creatures, is perhaps the one moſt deſerving of real commiſeration from his fellow-creatures.—Perhaps there is none which can bring forwards an aggregate of more exceſſive induſtry, harmleſs inoffenſive manners, and, ſorry I am to ſay, of dire poverty, than the little farmer. With ſcanty proviſion and exceſſive toil he can vie with the labourer in induſtry, but not like him can he in the hour of diſtreſs apply for pariſh relief. Many a man who writes his name on the pariſh books a *pauper*, and to whoſe relief *he* is obliged to contribute, has leſs claim to pariſh aſſiſtance, and leſs need of it than he has. To procure the ſmall pittance of his rent, he is compelled to threſh out the little produce of his harveſt almoſt at the inſtant it is houſed.—Got well or ill—yielding toughly or tenderly to the flail—it matters not to him, it muſt be threſhed out. His rent day is approaching, and he muſt make up his little purſe; he trots therefore to the market, and diſpoſes inſtantly of his ſcanty treaſure. If the price does not tempt him to part with it, his neceſſities do; and thus, like the great farmer, without conſulting the intereſt of the public, he promotes it moſt ſucceſsfully by a ſupply in thoſe times when the more opulent do not deal it out.

I think my readers muſt by this time be ſatisfied that the farmers have had injuſtice done them; that the greater part cannot be guilty of the crime of monopoly, even in the limited ſenſe imputed to them;

them; that of ſtudying their own convenience and pleaſure, in the diſpoſal of their property; and that thoſe who are ſo guilty, are the trueſt friends and the moſt valuable members of ſociety.

But I will not inſult the common ſenſe of thoſe who read this addreſs, by adding one argument more in refutation of the charges brought againſt this moſt worthy claſs of the community. In former times in this, and at the preſent moment in every other country, to mention the name of an Engliſh farmer, is to mention every thing that is manly, juſt, honourable, and uſeful in ſociety—every thing that is entitled to our regard and eſteem.—Have we juſt found out that theſe terms have been miſapplied?—that the character of the farmer is compounded of parſimony, cruelty, meanneſs, and avarice—that ſo as he fills but his coffers, the rich may be impoſed on, and the poor ſtarved—that with his principles he has loſt his common ſenſe, and to the title of rogue, adds that of ideot?

God forbid that ſuch ſhould be the general ſentiment!—I ſhould indeed deſpair of the commonwealth if it were thus vitiated at the core. The infection has already ſpread too far: it is time to ſtop it. The cure is in the common exertion of thoſe faculties, which the Almighty has given us. We ſhall then ſee the folly and cruelty of the charge we have brought againſt the farmer—we

ſhall quickly then replace him in that rank to which he is entitled, amongſt the moſt induſtrious, moſt uſeful, and moſt honourable claſſes in ſociety.

MILLER AND MEALMAN.

The next object of popular abuſe and reſentment is the miller, who to this trade neceſſarily unites that of mealman; or diſpoſer of the flour, pollard, and bran which his mill grinds. Whilſt only general rumour of monopoly and injuſtice is brought forward againſt the farmer, the miller is placed upon the higheſt record of this country, in the higheſt aſſembly of this nation, as (if we could deſcend on this occaſion to uſe an old pun) an *errant rogue in grain*; and as if the wonted odium againſt this claſs were not ſufficient, the public mind has been daily irritated, by diſcuſſions on the alarming diſcoveries made by the evidence brought forward in ſupport of the bill for the incorporation of a flour, meal, and bread company. One has no occaſion here to wander in the labyrinth of conjecture to find out the ground of the ſuſpicions entertained againſt the millers; we have them in detail, gravely brought forward by high authority, and argued upon at much length. The reſult of this argument and examination has been ſummed up by a noble lord, more

than

than uſually converſant in matters of trade, and is in ſubſtance as follows:

"That the millers (or mealmen) league together to defraud the public, and to oppreſs the poor—that they hoard up the grain, and ſell it out when manufactured, as it ſuits their intereſt; that ſo ample are their ſtores, and ſo immenſe their magazines, that a certain gentleman, well known as a great importer of corn and flour, and a conſiderable dealer in thoſe articles, could buy of the millers at one time 40,000 ſacks of flour, without in any degree affecting the market, and that he could have bought as much more, without producing any material alteration; that ſo immenſe are their profits, and ſo unreaſonable their expectations, that one of the moſt conſiderable of them in point of property had the aſſurance to avow, that he expected from 15 to 18 per cent. profit on his capital."

From an unexperienced and unthinking young man, juſt emancipated from college diſcipline, making his maiden effort in the ſenate, and willing to ſupply by aſſertion the want of facts, catching at every momentary gleam of popularity, however unattainable but by the ſacrifice of common ſenſe, one ſhould have not been ſurprized at an accuſation ſo bold—at a ſtring of charges ſo replete with abſurdity. The object might have been fully anſwered by it. This would-be patriot might have ſeen his name echoed to the public in the papers

of

of the day as the champion of a defrauded people—as the avenger of the poor man's wrongs.—This might have anſwered his purpoſe, and the truth or falſehood of the ſtatement would have been immaterial to him.—But that grave and conſiderate men, who could have no ſuch object, who, if they ever felt the love of popularity, are now too far advanced in life and too experienced, not to know the real value of it (and of courſe to care little about it) ſhould have brought forward a charge of the ſerious nature, which the firſt of theſe preſents, without ſome ſtrong ſpecific ground on which to reſt it, is to me moſt extraordinary and unaccountable. For, on what does the whole of this ſevere imputation rely for its ſupport? Why, to a ſale by the millers to an agent of government on a particular emergency, of 40,000 ſacks of flour.

Let us aſk a few queſtions as to this ſale. Was it of a ſociety of millers acting together that this was bought? No.—Was it of two or three unconnected, opulent ones? No.—Was the purchaſe made this year? No.—Was it made in a time of any ſcarcity? No.—Was it all bought on the ſame day? No.—Was it all to be delivered at the ſame time? No.—Was the time of delivery within a ſhort time? No.—What then is the truth of this tranſaction? Why it is ſimply this:

Mr. Claude Scott, an agent of government, who tranſacted a great part of its buſineſs in this line,

line, received an order to purchaſe for government the quantity of flour ſtated. The tranſaction took place *ſome years* ſince; it was at a period when the invaſion of the country was threatened, and miniſters wiſhed to form a depot for the uſe of any troops who might be encamped for the protection of it. There was no ſcarcity of corn or flour at the time, nor any apprehended. The manner in which it was bought precluded any poſſibility of affecting the market, for it was bought at the corn market of *all* the different millers in the neighbourhood of town, and as near as poſſible in equal proportions from each. The delivery was to be made at the rate of 5000 quarters per week, and would take *two months* in completing. The engagement for the whole quantity was made (but of this I am not quite poſitive, nor is it material) not on the ſame day, but at different days.

After this correct ſtatement of the tranſaction, what are we to ſuppoſe of the candour of the accuſers? and of the inference drawn from this tranſaction of the immenſe hoards kept by the millers, which could allow of this ſudden and immenſe ſupply. Having ſo fully rebutted every iota of charge that the nature of this contract could furniſh againſt the millers, it is unneceſſary to argue, which might be done with very great ſucceſs, that in the time of ſcarcity, a ſupply of this nature, ſo arranged could be eaſily effected without

without inconvenience to the public. Twenty millers providing 250 ſacks each per week, would form the amount wanted; and what would this be to men who, merely to ſupply their cuſtomers, and to provide work for their mills, ought moſt of them to have by them from 500 to 1000 quarters of wheat.

Perhaps this very tranſaction, whilſt from its nature it could not faſten any imputation of monopoly, is the beſt anſwer that can be given to the charge of combination. With ſuch a buyer on the market, bidding for a quantity equal to a fortnight's conſumption of the whole town, had they leagued together, knowing ſo well as they do the ſtate of the markets, and the influence which ſuch a demand muſt neceſſarily have had on them, they would have done in this caſe as they are ſuppoſed to do in all others; they would have held back their commodity, and advanced their price in proportion to the demand. If they had not done this, their combination would have been of no ſervice to them, and would have been unlike all other combinations. That they did not do this, that inſtead of acting in concert together, to take advantage of the wants of an immenſe cuſtomer, and that cuſtomer government (whom people are not apt to be over-nice in their dealings with) to keep back their goods from him with a view of raiſing the price, they came liberally forward, and ſupplied his

his wants on moderate terms: he himſelf tells you that the markets were not affected, and of courſe there could be no combination.

The next charge is that of immenſe exorbitant profit, and founded on the evidence of Mr. Pratt, who on being aſked what profit he ſhould expect on his capital, anſwered from 15 to 20 per cent.—Is there any want of conſcience in this expectation?—Is there a merchant in the city of London who would think his capital well laid out, which produced him leſs? and have not the majority in this war made a great deal more?—Excluſive of the riſk which the miller runs from the variation of the markets between the time of his buying wheat, and bringing it to market manufactured, and which, except on a riſing market, is always againſt him, he riſks not a little in theſe times from public odium. The abſurd nonſenſe, ſo plentifully afloat at this time, affects his intereſt more materially than people are aware of. They are apprehenſive of public commotion, and that they and their property will be amongſt the firſt victims; whilſt the outcry therefore is ſo ſtrong againſt them, they merely keep their mills going, and no greater ſtock of wheat by them than is neceſſary for that purpoſe. Enquire ſince theſe outrages commenced throughout the kingdom, and you will find this to have been generally the caſe, and particularly in the neighbourhood of London. Under all theſe diſadvantages, there-

fore, can we conſider it unreaſonable, that in the beſt and moſt flouriſhing times, when every thing goes ſmoothly on, the miller ſhould expect to make this profit with all the drawbacks upon it which he is liable to? If every man who embarks his property in trade, at leaſt where a conſiderable capital is neceſſary, think himſelf not over fortunate, in making from 20 to 30 per cent. upon it, is the miller (whoſe buſineſs requires an aſſiduous attention and bodily exertion equal to any other, whoſe riſks from various cauſes are as conſiderable, and the nature of whoſe employment is the moſt beneficial to the human race, and more neceſſary for its ſupport than any other) to be told that he is unconſcionable in expecting a profit leſs than the average of other trades? I am really at a loſs to find what argument can be uſed to prove the unreaſonableneſs of his expectations or the exorbitancy of his gains, if we regard his trade with a reference to that of others.

But let it be recollected (and it is not unworthy of remark) that at this period, when their profits have been ſuppoſed to be higheſt, the market having been more upon the riſe than fall, (except in the inſtance before alluded to, where the fall was very ſudden, and the millers ſuſtained a great loſs) the capital neceſſary for the mere purpoſe of carrying on the buſineſs, was neceſſarily very greatly extended. When wheat is at 3*l.* per quarter, the man whoſe mill requires a ſtock of wheat of 1000

quarters

quarters to keep it employed, and his cuſtomers regularly ſupplied, would require a capital for the ſole purpoſe of buying that article of grain only, of 3000*l.*—at preſent he would require from 6 to 7000*l.* for the ſame purpoſe. His wealth muſt then be very conſiderable indeed, if with ſo unuſual a draught upon his purſe, he can afford to ſink more money in ſpeculations, independent of his uſual trade. The public may be aſſured that ſuch is not the caſe. They know as little of monopoly as they do of combination; both are quite out of their way.

One ſenſibly regrets therefore, that men of clear good ſenſe, and great information, grown old in political ſcience, and well verſed in the true principles of commerce, ſhould lend their ear to prejudice ſo unfounded as that which includes in its cenſure a reſpectable and numerous body, and which ſo generally applied, *could* not be juſt—that knowing, as they muſt, how prone the public is to liſten to any accuſation againſt this uſeful but diſfavoured claſs, they ſhould have furniſhed materials for increaſed and equally unfounded calumny. Are the characters of men to be thus ſported with, to feed the groſs appetite of the day—to encourage that prejudice already too dangerous for the public weal? Are they to be held up to public odium, on proofs no better then theſe? To ſay the leaſt of it, ſuch conduct is ſadly indiſcreet—ſuch imputations unneceſſarily harſh. It has not been by ſuch treatment towards thoſe who riſk their property in its

ſupport, and who give their time to its ſervice, that this country has riſen to its preſent exalted and enviable commercial proſperity.

But if we give only a few moments more to the ſubject, we ſhall find that whilſt theſe harſh charges cannot be true in their general application, it is hardly poſſible they can be true, with reference to individuals in the trade. Let us reflect on what we mean by monopoly.—There can be no doubt, that public opinion defines monopoly to be "the getting into your poſſeſſion ſo conſiderable a quantity of any article, as to be enabled thereby, *in a great degree*, to command the price of it in the market." This is the leaſt favourable definition for me, that could be given; for I am certain that the general idea of monopoly goes much further, and includes the almoſt entire poſſeſſion of the article. Let us try it however, on this limited ſcale, as to its injurious effects, and ſee whether even this degree of evil exiſts.

In the commencement of this enquiry, let me acknowledge the ſtrong impreſſion my mind has received from much conſideration on the ſubject, that *there can be* no ſuch thing as monopoly in articles of conſumption ſo extenſive as wheat and flour.

If we are to particularize ſpots, where this idea appears to me moſt juſt, and eſpecially at this moment applicable, it is in the vicinity of the metropolis. The weekly conſumption of London alone

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is upwards of 20,000 ſacks; the value of which at the rate of 5*l.* per ſack, would be 100,000*l.* That man muſt be credulous indeed, and muſt have a ſtrange idea of the wealth of millers, who can ſuppoſe it poſſible, that any one, or any half dozen millers, if they could be brought to league together for the purpoſe, could ſpare from the accuſtomed demands upon their trade a ſum ſo conſiderable. They muſt be ſtrangely ignorant of the conſtant demands for ready money to carry on a manufactory even of this ſimple nature, who can believe that the largeſt miller in the vicinity of London, could ſpare in times like theſe, even a tenth of this ſum for ſuch a purpoſe, if his inclination prompted him ſo to do; I am by character acquainted with one amongſt the many reſpectable men in this buſineſs, whoſe dealings are perhaps as extenſive and conſiderable in this line as that of any other. I underſtand that the regular ſupply of wheat which he ought in common prudence to have by him merely for the ſupplying of his cuſtomers with flour, &c. is from 500 to 1000 quarters; let us take the medium 750 quarters, this at 6*l.* (the loweſt price ſince the commencement of the harveſt) amounts to 4500*l.* I believe him to be an opulent man, but I muſt have a ſtrange idea of his wealth to imagine, that whilſt he has ſo conſiderable a ſum lying as it were dead in *one* article alone of the many he deals in, he could ſpare four times that ſum, to ſpeculate beyond his

wants;

wants; no one will believe that he does ſo, or ever did when wheat was at the high price it is now.

But there muſt be ſome exiſting motive, ſome powerful inducement to make the miller even hoard up his flour at the late high prices—A very ſenſible writer, and acute obſerver of human nature* ſays "Every human action muſt have its motive and the motive muſt be equal to the conduct, or it is no motive at all." There can be only one motive which could influence the miller to hoard up his flour, and that is intereſt—Does he conſult this in the preſent moment, when the price can leave him little hopes of profit from ſpeculation? Is wheat at 6*l.* per quarter an object for a man to hazard his money upon? Beſides excluſive of the injury which theſe articles ſuſtain by keeping, and the loſs of wheat when remeaſured, it has always been conſidered as the intereſt of the miller to turn his money as quick as poſſible, and it is only by ſo doing that he can poſſibly make the vaſt profits imputed to him; for even thoſe who talk of the immenſity of his profits, account for it by the quick returns of his capital. We muſt alſo not forget that at the period when the clamour was loudeſt againſt them, there were two cauſes exiſting to check any ſpirit of enterprize or ſpeculation; the one was, the unavailing efforts they had been making to reſiſt the bill for incorporating the London Flour and

* Beattie on Truth.

Bread Company by which their ſpirits were broken, and their proſpects clouded—and the other, the loſs they had ſuſtained from the ſudden great fall in the price of Flour at the very ſame moment.—Whether it was occaſioned by theſe combined circumſtances, or not, yet true it is, (and I ſpeak it from authority) that during the later part of the ſummer, the generality of the Millers had ſcarcely a week's ſupply in advance, and ſome not half that quantity; and ſo completely were they run out towards the cloſe of the harveſt, that it was with great difficulty they could ſupply the wants of the Metropolis. This is ſurely a ſufficient anſwer to the charge of Monopoly as practiſed by them at that time.

But the public have a ſecurity againſt monopoly at any time in theſe articles, from the dealers themſelves. It is to be found in the very enlarged and very uſeful competition which every one knows exiſts in this trade, perhaps more ſo than in any other. When the public are informed that there are no leſs than 150 mills in the vicinity of the metropolis, which contribute to its ſupply, and that the owners are independent of and unconnected with each other, there can be no doubt that the competition is as great as it is uſeful: probably out of theſe mills one-third are the property of men of ſome capital, but the remaining two-thirds belong to thoſe who cannot afford to have a ſhilling lying idle, who, at the preſent and

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late high prices, buy juſt as much wheat as will ſupply their neceſſities, and the inſtant it is manufactured return it to the market; they have no money to ſpeculate with—they can ſcarcely afford to run the riſk between market and market. The public may be ſatisfied that there is no trade where the competition is more extenſive, and the obſtacles to monopoly ſo great as in this trade, ſo much the object of their ſuſpicions. Where there are 150 competitors in one market, one can hardly admit the poſſibility of monopoly.

One argument more remains (if it were wanted) to ſatisfy the moſt incredulous how little reaſon there has been to ſuppoſe any thing like monopoly within theſe laſt ſix months. When we conſider the regular ſupply which the metropolis has received in the laſt ſpring and ſummer from the millers, equal to all its wants and demands; when we know how ſcanty were the home as well as foreign ſupplies, how ſparingly (and fortunately ſo) they were from neceſſity dealt out, how great was the unprecedented demand for the ſupply of the coaſt from the London market, we may be aſſured that if there had been any thing like a monopoly, or even the holding any conſiderable quantity back from the market, the inconvenience would have been inſtantly and ſeverely felt, and the cauſe eaſily diſcovered. But it is in evidence that there never was a deficiency of ſupply, and to procure this muſt have required a more than common activity

tivity from the trade, and a conduct very different from monopoly.

So connected with the millers and mealmen, and ſo immediately directed againſt them is the bill which has paſſed both Houſes for incorporating this Flour and Bread Company, that it will not, perhaps, be amiſs to diſcuſs in this place a ſubject ſo extraordinary and important. It will require no little ſophiſtry to reconcile this clamour againſt the monopoly of the millers and mealmen, with the grant to a chartered corporation of the largeſt monopoly of a *neceſſary* article ever conceded to any body. It reminds one of the remedy for a ſtain, by pouring on it a greater portion of the liquor that occaſioned it.—What! ſhall we echo from country to country the idle nonſenſe of monopoliſts in the perſons of unconnected millers and mealmen, and in the ſame breath give our ſanction to the incorporation of peers, commoners and merchants, with an avowed capital of 150,000*l.* to commence their operations with?

If theſe millers have furniſhed London with a regular and ample ſupply, what occaſion for more mills? if they have found a difficulty in procuring ſufficient corn to work their mills, why increaſe the difficulty by erecting another immenſe one in their neighbourhood? What muſt an unbiaſſed diſpaſſionate man think of the conſiſtency of thoſe who charge individuals with hoarding up grain, who accuſe theſe large millers of monopoly and

the ruin of fair competition, yet are exerting their eloquence, their talents, and their influence, to perſuade the legiſlature to grant a chartered monopoly of 120,000 ſacks of flour per annum, in amount no leſs than a *tenth* of the ſupply of the metropolis.

The benevolent motives which have actuated many of the ſubſcribers to, and promoters of this chartered company, no one can diſpute—when we read their names it would be injuſtice to refuſe to many the tribute of our reſpect for the benevolence and purity of their motives. But it would be requiring too much to expect our belief, that a ſole regard for the public good, unmixed with any private intereſt, has actuated the conduct of *every* ſubſcriber; much more unreaſonable would it be to require our aſſent to the propriety of the remedy which the legiſlature has ſuggeſted to cure the evil of monopoly.—Is there a man of plain ſenſe in the country who does not ſee the groſs inconſiſtency of ſuch conduct and the abſurdity of the reaſoning which has been brought forwards in its ſupport?

I have before ſtated, that the regular ſupply of London comes from 150 mills in its vicinity, the capitals of which are ſome very conſiderable and others very trifling. I think one might without fear of contradiction hazard an aſſertion, that if a third of the moſt opulent of theſe millers, were to league together (as they have been accuſed) to

hoard

hoard up the grain and to diſtreſs the public, the capital they could raiſe to ſpeculate with, the injury they could do the market would be very inferior to that we have reaſon to apprehend from the wealth and power of this great company. No one will ſuppoſe that immenſe as is the oſtenſible capital, there are no means of increaſing it beyond legiſlative permiſſion. The open capital we know, but are there any bounds to the ſecret capital which may hereafter be employed?

If the legiſlature has pronounced the danger to be great, from the wealth and ſuppoſed good underſtanding of the millers and mealmen, of whoſe capital and means of monopoly they can know nothing, how can it with any conſiſtency attempt to perſuade you, that from this great corporation, whoſe immenſe capital they have ſanctioned, and to whoſe means of ſecretly extending it they cannot be blind, no danger is to be apprehended. Will you allow them to ſay to you in anſwer to this, 'The character of theſe men is 'your ſecurity; the pledge of their good conduct 'is to be found in their rank and ſtation. Theſe 'are a band of patriots who have riſen up to 'avenge the cauſe of the poor, to ſtand between 'the defrauded public and theſe avaricious blood-'ſuckers, the millers and bakers—no intereſt but 'the public good animates them; and to read their 'names is to do juſtice to their views.'

Such, indeed, has been the language which you

have heard from the higheſt authorities; ſuch have been the means uſed to engage the public ſupport without doors to the meaſure that was paſſing within.—The ſupporters of it, if they have not acted with the utmoſt candour, have uſed the extremeſt policy. With a thorough knowledge of thoſe they had to deal with, they took advantage of the moment when the public mind was ſcured by the high price of bread, and inclined to believe any thing, however abſurd, to direct their reſentment againſt that body to whom the common people are always hoſtile. To them and to their artifices they impute a preſent want, and a danger of greater. The reſentment already excited againſt the miller and baker is not ſufficient for their purpoſes, the public have not had duſt enough thrown into their eyes, and they come forward to increaſe the quantity and to thoroughly blind them.

When they have thus paved the way for their grand panaceum, they collect together the gaping and hungry crowd, and thus addreſs them:

'My good friends, we the voluntary guardians 'of the public weal, the diſintereſted band of ſelf-'elected patriots, have viewed with a philanthropic 'concern the diſtreſſes which you are all now ex-'periencing from the cruel avarice of the miller 'and mealman, and from the roguery of the 'baker—we are ſenſible of the claims you have to 'legiſlative interference to protect you againſt theſe 'tyrants whoſe *ſlaves* you are.—Entitled to redreſs

'we

'we will procure it for you—we will protect you
'againſt theſe powerful and rich monopoliſts, theſe
'hoarders of grain, whoſe deſign is to ſtarve you
'—they ſhall no longer have the power to prey
'upon your wants—through us ſhall they pierce
'in future before they can wound you—in us
'will you find an impenetrable phalanx, that will
'effectually ſcreen you againſt their mercileſs
'depredations. After theſe profeſſions, doubt not
'our motives or our ſervices, if in the remedies
'we ſuggeſt, there ſhould appear ſome trifling
'inconſiſtency. Deſperate diſeaſes you know
'require deſperate remedies; you may not quite
'comprehend the nature of the means we ſhall
'ſuggeſt for your deliverance—you may not en-
'tirely be able to reconcile it to common ſenſe, or
'to your common experience; but it is, neverthe-
'leſs, ſuch as is ſuited to your preſent circumſtances
'—ſuch as your neceſſities call for, and ſuch as will
'heal the wounds under which you at preſent
'groan. But we will keep you no longer in ſuſ-
'pence. Our plan is this: the Millers and Meal-
'men hoard up the Corn and Flour, and deal it
'out to you, as it ſuits their intereſt or pleaſure.
'We mean to apply to Parliament to allow *us* to
'be the great hoarders—but we will deal the Flour
'out to you, liberally and without conſulting our
'intereſt. They have entered into a ſecret com-
'bination to raiſe the price of the markets, in or-
'der to diſtreſs you—*We* mean to enter into an

'open

'open one to relieve you—Though it is not in our 'power to prove, that "any thing like a criminal "or an illegal combination" exiſts among them, yet 'there is "no doubt they have that kind of under- "ſtanding one with another, *which prevents* the "advantages of fair competition," and this their 'immenſe capitals furniſh them with the means of 'doing.—*We* mean to have an underſtanding 'amongſt ourſelves; we mean to act together; 'but then it is ſolely for your advantage.—We 'are ſenſible of this principle, that "where there is "no equality, there can be no competition." That 'the mouſe cannot compete with the elephant, or 'the ſparrow with the eagle; but we mean not to 'take advantage of our ſtrength, we intend to 'open the market to fair and free competition, '*by driving theſe rich, unconſcionable millers and* '*mealmen out of it*. No danger can be appre- 'hended from *our* capital, for though it is true '150,000*l.* ſounds a great deal, yet it only ſounds 'ſo to thoſe, who like you, are unaccuſtomed to 'ſuch ſounds—in *our* hands no danger is to be 'apprehended from it, though a twentieth part in 'theirs would be truly alarming.

'Theſe millers have no reſtriction on their com- 'merce, they may buy or ſell corn to any extent, 'and if from hoarding up it ſhould become unfit for 'uſe, they can ſell it out, free from reſtraint, for 'others to poiſon the public with. We, on the 'contrary, are reſtricted as to the quantity of

corn

'corn we can either buy, ſell, or manufacture; 'our dealings muſt be *limited to a tenth* part of the 'conſumption of the metropolis, and we can 'only diſpoſe of 52,000 quarters of corn in the 'year, even if it ſhould become muſty on our 'hands, and our hoards be ever ſo conſiderable. 'You have heard of the alarming profits of their 'trade! No wonder, when their expectations of '15 to 18 per cent. is openly avowed by one of 'their principal dealers. *We* are content with 'only 10 per cent. profit. It is true they devote 'all their time and attention; their ſkill and 'experience; embark all their capital, and run 'every riſk for this profit. We, to be ſure, (at 'leaſt the greateſt part of us,) mean to ſit at 'home, and take no ſhare in the trouble; we 'ſhall carry no ſkill or experience to the concern, 'becauſe we have it not; we ſhall embark none 'of us more than 1000*l.* and can run no riſk 'beyond it; but even with all this difference you 'muſt perceive the enormity of *their* profits, and 'the moderation of *ours*.

'To ſum up all in a few words, we mean to 'deſtroy monopoly, by erecting one of our own '—we propoſe to root out combination by com-'bining together ourſelves—we will protect you 'againſt the effects of capital, by creating a 'monſtrous one of our own; and we intend to 'open competition by means of a purſe ſo weighty 'as to drive away every competitor.

'Do

'Do not, we entreat you, doubt the benefit you 'will derive from theſe benevolent efforts on our 'part; do not diſtruſt us merely becauſe you do not 'quite underſtand the drift of our arguments, or 'as yet perceive the reaſon of them. When you 'know of whom we are compoſed, all appre-'henſions of our capacity to ſerve you, or of the 'purity of our motives, will inſtantly vaniſh. 'We are compounded of the moſt genuine pa-'triots ſelected from the members of both legiſla-'tures, and of the moſt eminent in ſpirit, and 'wealthy in purſe amongſt the merchants and 'bankers of London. We need not, ſurely, add 'more to induce you to give us your ſupport.'

Did ever impudent *Charlatan*, puffing off his nauſeous drugs, more completely gull a ſenſeleſs mob, than theſe perſons have the credulous and inconſiſtent public? Wonderful as it may appear, when reaſon has cooled the prejudices with which the public mind is tainted, yet upon ſuch and no better foundation, on argument not one whit more ſolid, however rendered more ſpecious by the decorative charms of eloquence, has this immenſe project received the ſanction of the legiſlature amidſt the conſenting voice of the people—of thoſe who for months paſt had been ringing all the changes upon monopoliſts and great millers. Take from the arguments in ſupport of this meaſure the extrinſick ornament with which they have been clothed, and they amount in ſubſtance to the addreſs

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I have put into the mouths of the projectors. Read what paſſed at the time, and you will find that if I have "nothing extenuated," I have not "ſet down ought in malice."

And is it in ſupport of ſuch a project, and on ſuch grounds, that this highly uſeful body of men, engaged in the moſt neceſſary and extenſive trade in the world, againſt whoſe honour and fair dealing not the ſlighteſt imputation could be extorted from witneſſes brought in ſupport of the meaſure—who on the contrary were proved by their teſtimony in a time of unexampled ſcarcity, when the commodity was difficult of procurance for manufacture, to have regularly, and amply ſupplied the wants of the metropolis, and *with a conſiderably leſs profit, than by law they were entitled to*, are to be held up to the public notice as men requiring ſtrong legiſlative controul—and this not by proviſions to reſtrain their abuſes if any exiſted, but by erecting an almoſt unbounded monopoly at their gates.

The millers may truly ſay, they were not on that occaſion dealt fairly by. It is impoſſible to ſay (as has been ſaid) that no imputation was meant towards them—but that the only view of the legiſlature was by increaſing the competition, to lower the price for the intereſt of the people. If we read the preamble to the bill—if we recollect the language uſed in all places, where this ſubject was diſcuſſed, we cannot heſitate to pronounce, that the baſis of the application to par-

liament, was the alledged miſconduct of the trade.

Let it not be thought that I have any intereſt in the cauſe of the millers—I know none of them, except by character—but I do not believe inſinuations that are improbable, and charges that are impoſſible to be true, let them come from what quarter they will.

Had not a principle of juſtice raiſed my pen in their ſupport, the gratitude which in common with the public, I feel for their conduct, under the unjuſt obloquy with which they have been loaded, would have induced me to ſtand forward. I dread to think what would have been the conſequence, if thoſe men, yielding to the natural impulſe of reſentment, which ſuch conduct towards any men muſt excite, had withdrawn their aſſiſtance from the public even for one week. Any man who walks into a baker's ſhop, and learns the quantity of flour he has by him, will eaſily appreciate the danger. Who then are the men moſt entitled to the term of patriots—thoſe who, whilſt they are holding up to public odium, as dangerous monopoliſts, and covetous hoarders, a large portion of their fellow creatures, are obtaining an unheard-of monopoly themſelves, or thoſe who, threatened and even inſulted in their perſons, and endangered in their property, from the real combination forming againſt them, oppoſe only to unfounded calumny, ſilent contempt; and inſtead

of

of retorting on the heads of their accuſers, and of a public deluded by their miſrepreſentations, that deadly vengeance with which they might repay the harſh treatment they have received, continue to give their uſual aid to that public by whom they have been injured (not indeed with all their former energy and activity, for under ſuch uſage, how can it be expected) relying on their innocence for acquittal at the bar of the public, when prejudice ſhall be done away, and ſober reaſon ſhall have reſumed her ſeat.

In ſpite of every thing which has been lately ſaid of that great man, and profound politician, Dr. Adam Smith, however obſolete his opinions on the cauſes of national wealth and proſperity may be conſidered; however he may have been charged with borrowing his doctrines on the freedom of trade from the French œconomiſts of that day—my poor judgment cannot refuſe to give its unqualified aſſent to the ſoundneſs of thoſe principles, which he has ſo ably and impreſſively laid down on the ſubject of the freedom of trade—Every tittle which he has uttered on charters, incorporations and excluſive privileges, I moſt fully ſubſcribe to. The abſolute and unqualified freedom of trade, unfettered by legiſlative reſtrictions on the one hand, or ſupported by partial immunities on the other, form the only real foundation of commercial greatneſs. They are eſſential to its proſperity; at leaſt to that utmoſt proſperous ſtate

it is capable of—interfere with its progreſs in any ſhape—attempt to reſtrain it, or pretend to aſſiſt it, the injury you do it is almoſt certain, you check its natural and vigorous ſhoots, and you impede, inſtead of haſten its progreſs to maturity.

I am aware, that modern opinion and modern conduct ſmile at theſe doctrines, and think them only applicable to times that have been long ſince paſt, when commerce was in its infancy, and not ſuited to the preſent advanced ſtate of it. I, on the contrary, think them appropriate to every period; and ſuch as no commercial country can depart from, except in thoſe ſtrong caſes of neceſſity which juſtify a temporary departure from any principle, however univerſal.

With theſe opinions, it cannot then be wondered at that I am an enemy to all legal monopolies; the principle of them all is at enmity with commerce. Yet there are ſome of that nature from which I apprehend no ſerious injury, becauſe even the omnipotence of parliament, though in appearance it may give it, cannot in reality.

Were the legiſlature to give to any ſociety, however numerous and wealthy, thoſe corporate advantages, thoſe immunities and excluſive privileges, which would generally eſtabliſh the moſt entire monopoly poſſible; if theſe were given to men embarking in a concern, where a great and neceſſary article of life was concerned, I ſhould not

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be apprehenſive of the danger of monopoly from them.

On this principle, however extenſive the power of this vaſt company may be, however large their allowed capital, and however capable of concealed increaſe, yet I have no apprehenſions of injury to the public from their monopoly, if they were to attempt it. The articles they deal in, admit not of it. Moſt certainly in a market very ſcantily ſupplied, their purchaſes would in ſome degree affect it; but their demand would be ſoon known, and the ſupply would regulate itſelf accordingly. The periſhableneſs of the commodities, the great loſs on the ſmalleſt diminution of their price, the ſerious expence of their warehouſe-room, and loſs of intereſt on the money ſunk—the immenſe ſums which in times of ſcarcity (the only times when monopoly *can* be dangerous) are neceſſary to be taken out of their trade for the purpoſe of ſpeculation—the almoſt certain combination which they would run the danger of exciting againſt them, from the whole trade, who would watch their proceedings with a jealous eye—and laſtly, that fear of public reſentment, and the effects of it which they naturally would feel—all combine as ample ſecurities to the public, againſt any danger of monopoly from this inſtitution.

Nor let the trade itſelf entertain any ſerious apprehenſions of the injury *they* will ſuſtain from them. I have ſtrongly my doubts whether the company

company will take advantage of the legiſlative permiſſion to eſtabliſh themſelves; if they conſult their intereſt, they will not: allow however that it is eſtabliſhed on the vaſt ſyſtem propoſed, yet there is no occaſion for alarm.—Whilſt the company retains it's original ſupporters, like all new inſtitutions, it may go on at firſt with ſpirit and energy—it may for a time abridge the miller of ſome little of his profits—it may even deprive him of a few of his cuſtomers.—But theſe will be very few, for they are all of courſe labouring under the ſame opprobrium as the millers; with them they make a common cauſe, and it is not probable they will be allured by an inconſiderable advantage to deſert their old friends.

The company will have in a great meaſure to force their market; they will not eaſily effect it: people are generally more inclined to deal with individuals than with large bodies. They are apt to conſider the latter as aſſuming a greater conſequence, an higher rank and a proud ſuperiority; from whatever cauſe it proceeds, they do not feel on a par with them.

If however matters go ſmoothly on at firſt, if the unexpected reſtrictions which the upper Houſe of Parliament have thought proper to impoſe on their trade, and the ſcrutiny it has ſubjected them to, ſhould not have diſguſted the original projectors of the ſcheme, and induced them to withdraw their names already, yet it is very improbable, that a

perfect

perfect and cordial union ſhould long exiſt. Projects founded on philanthropy alone are rarely permanent. A motive ſo honourable at firſt readily attracts innumerable friends; the feeling mind preſſes forwards to participate in ſchemes where the prominent feature is benevolence; but ſchemes founded in paſſion, and ſupported by enthuſiaſm, from their nature cannot be laſting. Thoſe who embark on this principle alone ſoon grow cool, a thouſand fears of ill ſucceſs, ariſing from ignorance of the nature of the project, a thouſand apprehenſions leſt in *their* turn they ſhould become the objects of public hatred and indignation—numberleſs ſuſpicions, leſt the ſpirit of benevolence and public good, which has actuated them ſhould not be generally extended through the concern, but that they have been made the dupe of deſigning projectors—in fine a thouſand unaccountable (and perhaps wholly unfounded) ideas, praying inceſſantly on their minds, drive the moſt timid, but perhaps not the leaſt reſpectable, from their body, or occaſion them to watch the conduct of their colleagues with a diſtruſt and jealouſy, that will damp all ſpirit, and depreſs the energy and unanimity, ſo neceſſary to carry on with effect an extenſive and important concern. That this will be the caſe ſooner or later I have not the ſmalleſt doubt; the company will then dwindle by degrees into inſignificance as a public concern. The character and names which ſupport it, if withdrawn, will ſhake the project at its baſe:

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in proportion as they withdraw themſelves, the public ſupport will ceaſe, it will only be conſidered as the largeſt mill in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and as the moſt prominent object in time of ſcarcity, for the public prejudice to vent its ill humour, if not its vengeance on. All the evils imputed generally to the millers will find here an object to faſten upon. The largeneſs of their capital, the immenſity of their dealings, and the ample ſtock they will be obliged to keep by them, exaggerated as theſe circumſtances always are, will excite a reſentment, which may have the effect of ſcreening the millers, by furniſhing a larger (and of conſequence a better) object for prejudice. The project in that caſe if it is fortunate enough to eſcape the fate of a former ſimilar one (ſimilar at leaſt in principle, if not in extent) will become too unwieldy for the management of a few, and too little advantageous to induce a continuance; it will gradually die away, if it ſuffers not a premature death; and thoſe who have retained their ſhares, will have to divide their loſſes.

In predicting this termination of a ſcheme ſo gigantic, one hazards little of the credit of prophecy. Is there any inſtance of an immenſe trade, in which a great variety of perſons (and in this concern it muſt be remembered that there *may* be 6000 perſons, there *muſt* be 150) of different rank in life, of different purſuits, all new to the buſineſs itſelf, and the greater part to any buſineſs but that

of

of pleaſure, embarked and aſſociated together, have ſucceeded to any thing like the extent of their object. Who ever heard of the wealth, which the Albion Company were gaining, at the time that the dreadful cataſtrophe happened to their mill? What has been the ſucceſs of the Birmingham Bread Company, that has done ſuch wonders on a capital of 6000*l.* in ſupplying its proprietors with bad bread, cheaper than the neighbourhood eat their good? Where is the inſtance of a company in any degree ſo numerous as this, that continued to act together, on the principles and plans, with with which they ſet out? I never heard of one, and I believe this to be leſs likely to do ſo than any other.

I cannot ſay I ſhould much regret their ill ſucceſs; an inſtitution which owes its origin to unfounded calumny and unjuſt aſperſion, cannot carry with it the wiſhes and hopes of liberal men.

In my defence of the millers and mealman I have gone (without intending it) into conſiderable length. They are more the objects of public indignation than any other branch of the trade, and of courſe a longer examination of their charges becomes neceſſary; but long as I have already been, I cannot diſmiſs this ſubject altogether, without taking notice of a more than ordinary prejudice againſt a particular deſcription of perſons concerned in the ſame branch. I allude to the Quakers. From whatever cauſe it ariſes, the common people (and

indeed ſome of their ſuperiors) entertain ſtrange ſuſpicions of this ſect. If we are to credit what is ſaid, they are compoſed of roguery and falſehood, verſed in every ſpecies of low cunning, and reſtrained by their principles from the aſſiſtance of oaths, fill up the chaſm, by the aid of the moſt barefaced untruths; ſuch and much worſe are the allegations againſt them.

It ſeems to be the nature of man, where his mind has not been expanded by liberal education, to believe that whatever is myſterious, is wicked, and that nothing can be honeſt, which we do not comprehend—and that no deſcription of men can have good intentions, who differ from the generality in points ſo eſſential as their *dreſs* and their *habits*—who uſurp the privilege of a peculiar ſimplicity of manners—and who have the aſſurance in a country where there is an eſtabliſhed church, to follow a peculiar form of worſhip of their own.

It is more than probable that many of the ſuſpicions we entertain againſt this claſs, owe their riſe to the broad brims of their hats, the ſquare cut of their coats, or the general uſe of the ſecond perſon in their converſation. I declare ſeriouſly that I could never account in a manner more honourable to their accuſers, for the ſo generally raiſed prejudice againſt them, than from their ſingularity of manners and dreſs; I have never heard a better reaſon aſſigned; nor (to the honour of the ſect be it ſpoken) do I believe they *can* produce a better;

except

except we can draw any thing from the common obſervation intended in their disfavour "that a man muſt be ſharp indeed, who can be too ſharp for a quaker," (I give the obſervation in ſubſtance though I drop the groſſneſs of the terms).

What imputation, ſuppoſing this charge to be juſt, is fixed on the Quaker by the proof of it. It means nothing more than that the quaker has his wits about him—why ſhould he not? I know nothing in this for which he needs bluſh. Is it ſtrange that men, who from the principles they profeſs, are of neceſſity precluded from participating in the common amuſements of life; who are debarred from thoſe enjoyments, which we all think innocent, (and which perhaps are ſo) ſhould devote their attention to that line of life they have choſen, or which has been ſelected for them by their friends, with an attention, a keenneſs and ſolicitude, reſulting from a mind, directed to that only purſuit; and undiverted by thoſe engagements, which, forbidden to them, occupy no ſmall portion of our time and thoughts. Is it wonderful, that men thus abſtracted from pleaſure, ſhould fly to buſineſs as a reſource againſt ennui; and that flying to it, they ſhould be more thoroughly maſters of it—more correct and expert in their manner of tranſacting it, than thoſe who mix with their buſineſs pleaſure, and ſuffer it too frequently to take the lead.

And is it for this enviable ſkill, this happy adroitneſs in, and punctual attention to, buſineſs, that

we ſo liberally deal out our charges againſt their ſharpneſs, and our inſinuations againſt their honeſty and ſincerity?—Where are the proofs? Does guilt in all caſes follow accuſation?

I have no acquaintance, but I have had dealings with quakers in trade, as moſt others muſt have had: in theſe inſtances, I have perceived no particular ſharpneſs or inclination to take unfair advantage of me, though I have witneſſed a punctuality and preciſion which we muſt all like, and which it would be well if many tradeſmen imitated. In the intercourſe I have had with them, I have found in them an honeſt openneſs and ſuavity of manners which I can ill reconcile to deceit or injuſtice. With principles peculiar to themſelves, and with a line of ſeparation which divides them from their fellow-creatures, I have witneſſed a philanthropy which excluded the idea of ſect—a feeling for public miſery that recogniſed no religious diſtinction of ſect or perſuaſion. Inoffenſive in their manners, placid in their temper, and exemplary in the diſcharge of the relative and ſocial duties of life; I have always conſidered them as honourable and peaceable ſubjects—as objects of envy, not of reproach—as demanding our reſpect and eſteem, not deſerving our ſuſpicions and reproaches; much leſs that perſonal inſult, and, even injury, with which an unreſiſting individual of the ſect was treated, to the diſgrace of the country,

of

by a ſavage mob in his way to the regular diſcharge of his duty.

But there is a teſtimony of their general worth —of the purity of their conduct, the honeſty of their dealings, and the high claim they have to the title of good citizens, which prejudice cannot reſiſt, and which muſt raiſe them, as a body, very high in public eſtimation. Who ſees in the calendars of crimes and miſdemeanors, which every county ſends forth, or in the proceſſes of thoſe civil courts, with which this kingdom abounds, the name of a quaker?—Amenable with the reſt of his fellow-creatures to juſtice, who ſees him at its bar?—Liable to civil proceſs, for injuſtice in his dealings, who can find his name as plaintiff or defendant? If it is ſeen, it is ſo rare, as almoſt to be a phenomenon in the courts of law; and yet we may be well aſſured that ſo little is the public mind diſpoſed to favor them—ſo narrowly is their conduct watched—ſo prone are men to take advantage of any ſlip, which inadvertency even might occaſion, that detection would tread quickly on the heels of guilt, and the appeal to juſtice would follow with equal ſteps; it would be a triumph that malice could not afford to loſe, and which prejudice would greedily lay hold of.

One need not add more in defence of the quakers: this fact ſpeaks louder in their vindication than a thouſand arguments.

After

After ſo long a diſcuſſion of this branch of trade, I have only to add, that I hope that the millers and mealmen will not be conſigned to obloquy, merely becauſe the clamour is loudeſt againſt them. We are too much inclined to join in the cry, without enquiring or caring what it is about.

FLOUR FACTORS.

A thorough miſunderſtanding of the nature of their buſineſs could alone have ſubjected this claſs to any ſuſpicion of being acceſſary to the public wants. The ſame cry which has been raiſed againſt the millers *of combining together to raiſe the markets*, has been with equal juſtice and truth applied alſo to them. A ſimple ſtatement of the nature of their employ is all that I can think neceſſary to remove ſuch ſuſpicions.

Beſides the miller, who, in and near town, ſupplies the bakers of the metropolis and its vicinity, there is this middle man the Flour Factor, who is the agent of the country millers that ſupply the town much more conſiderably than the millers near town.

It is true that if occaſionally (and of late this has been unfortunately much the caſe) the country millers do not furniſh them with a ſupply equal to the demand of their conſtant cuſtomers, or they have reaſon to ſuppoſe that will not be the caſe,

to

to prevent the inconvenience that their cuſtomers will ſuſtain, and in order to keep them together, they will buy on their own account; of courſe ſuch purchaſes ſometimes ſucceed, and ſometimes not; but it is notorious that the latter is more frequently the caſe. But to believe that they monopolize any quantity on ſpeculation, is totally void of foundation; the fact is, that in the article of flour there is no ſpeculation. The factors never buy any themſelves except in the caſe I have ſtated, and they then do it with unwillingneſs, and with no proſpect of pecuniary advantage. In times of great abundance of the article, when there is a larger ſupply than demand, the flour is landed, and waits the purchaſe of the bakers: it has been formerly to a very large amount; ſometimes there have been on the wharfs of London as large a quantity as 20 or 30,000 ſacks, but alas! theſe times are paſſed, and the ſcrutinizing eye of want would for the laſt ſix months have wearied itſelf in the ſearch of even 100 ſacks of flour lying on the wharfs after it had been landed twenty-four hours; in truth, the orders are almoſt always now beyond the ſupply, and on the arrival of the flour it inſtantly goes to the baker.

But if it were true that they purchaſed more freely for themſelves than they are ſtated to do, how is the public intereſt affected by it? In dealing on their own account they may make a good bargain, but what matters it to the people? It is

not

not in their power to affix the price at which they will ſell it. The price (as in a great and neceſſary article *always* is the caſe) depends on the real ſcarcity of the article, not of that which is in their hands, but in that of the trade in general. If they were all to combine together to raiſe the price, the millers near town (their natural enemies) would of courſe combine againſt them; but independent of the money they muſt command ſo to do, what in theſe times of ſhort ſupply is to become of their cuſtomers? Are the bakers to ſhut up their ſhops? One need not waſte a moment in ſhewing the abſurdity of this ſuppoſition—they could not, they would not dare to do it; in truth, they never have; it is not their intereſt ſo to do. Perhaps the little good underſtanding which ſubſiſts between the factors (both the corn and flour factors) is a circumſtance more to be lamented, and the effects to be dreaded more, than that of combination. It is well known that the jealouſy which the factors entertain of each other (ſo little of any thing like combination is there) makes them all anxious to do the beſt for their employers, and of courſe the public may by this means have occaſionally the price ſomewhat greater than it otherwiſe would be. How groundleſs then is the charge of combination applied to them—how improbable and how contrary to the real truth! and yet the factor is ſuppoſed to be cloſely allied in iniquity to the miller;

and

and to be intereſted in occaſioning a ſcarcity from which he can derive no benefit, but muſt ſuſtain injury.—The lower the price the leſs the oeconomy, and conſequently the greater the demand and the more increaſed his profits. It requires very little reflection (but prejudice allows no time for that) to perceive how intimately his intereſt and that of the people are united—he cannot be his own friend and their enemy.

In regular gradation comes next

THE BAKER.

And moſt certainly if there is a man in this favoured iſle, who has juſt ground of complaint of the ſeverity of the laws and the partiality of its operations in his disfavour, it is this man.—Whilſt all his brethren in trade are left to the free and unreſtrained diſpoſal of their property at prices fixed by themſelves, whilſt they have free liberty to conſult their own convenience, pleaſure, and intereſt in what they part with to the public, the legiſlature has (whether wiſely or not) cramped his trade with reſtrictions, and fettered him with obligations which leave him a mere paſſive inſtrument of legal direction. Every morſel of flour he buys, and every ſhilling he pays for it, he is compelled to return upon oath to a fixed juriſdiction, who then affix the price at which the manufactured commodity is to be ſold by him to the public.—That boaſted privilege which Engliſhmen ſo

highly and juſtly value, the ſacredneſs of their dwelling, attaches not to him. Authority *may* exerciſe towards him its wantonneſs at will, and under pretence of adulterated flour or bread, may ranſack his trough or ſhelves, or analyſe every batch of bread he brings from the oven.—I do not ſay that this is the harſh treatment he often experiences, but it *may* be ſo; he has no protection againſt it, ſave in the liberality and forbearance of thoſe who adminiſter the laws. With all theſe checks and reſtraints on his dealings, with theſe marks ſet upon him to diſtinguiſh him from his brethren in trade, one ſhould have expected that the impoſſibility of his injuring the public would have been his protection againſt their reſentment: no ſuch thing; there is no man more the object of popular vengeance than himſelf.—The moment a ſcarcity of corn and a conſequent dearneſs of bread is felt by the public, his ſhop is the firſt reſort of thoſe who intend to make that dearneſs the pretence for civil commotion. It is not peculiar to this, but it is the ſame in every country upon a ſimilar occaſion. It was the caſe at Paris in 1789, and it is the caſe here in 1800, and it will ever be ſo. You receive your ſupply of daily ſuſtenance from him, and *therefore* if there is any ſcantineſs in the ſupply or dearneſs in the price, it muſt be his fault. The cry goes quickly round 'The baker wants to ſtarve you; he has 'plenty of flour by him, but he will not bake

'it;

'it; he has abundance of bread, but he will not 'ſell it under this unconſcionable price—let us go 'and ſell it for him on our own terms.' The contents of his ſhelves and counters are inſtantly dealt out at their ſovereign will and pleaſure, and the villainy and cruelty of their conduct are attempted to be palliated by a payment of the article at a price fixed by themſelves. Happy is he if he gets off thus well: but not unfrequently, after plundering his property, they inſult his perſon and threaten his life.

In God's name what has this man done? what are the crimes of which by poſſibility he can have been guilty to draw down your indignation againſt him? If for the public good it has been thought adviſeable to take from him his free agency, is it fair to load him with reſponſibility? If his bread is dear, aſk the Lord Mayor why he has raiſed it. Believe not, that the baker is leſs intereſted than you, that his bread ſhould be good, cheap, and abundant. By the firſt he will retain and increaſe his cuſtomers; by the ſecond he will have more to ſell; and by the third his little capital will go the farther;—and by all three he will keep his natural enemies, the common people, in good humour, and the mob without any excuſe for outrage.

But little as the pretence can be to load this man with inſults and reproaches, who is the mere inſtrument to conſummate for you that proviſion he receives in its rude ſtate, and in a manner and at a

price which others (not himſelf) have preſcribed; too true it is that ſuch is the conduct of the people towards him. Within theſe laſt few weeks the deſtruction or plunder of mills and the ſacking of baker's ſhops (or at leaſt the taking into their own hands the aſſize and ſale of his bread) have been ſtated by the wicked, and believed by the ignorant, to be reſources againſt ſcarcity, and the grand ſpecific to reſtore plenty.

I will allow, as ſome little palliation for the brutality of the common people towards them, that inſtances are frequently on record of bakers who ſell bread ſhort of its aſſized weight. The crime itſelf, in the abſtract, is moſt ſevere and unjuſtifiable. —The poor man that cannot have his pennyworth for his penny in theſe hard times, has a claim on your interference which humanity will not refuſe him. But let it not be imagined that every man who is charged with this offence, and proved to be guilty of it, has had an intention of cheating his cuſtomers. Where there is a large deficiency of weight he deſerves the rigour of the law and the indignation of his fellow-creatures—no man will attempt to defend him; but it is poſſible to convict him on a very ſlight deficiency of weight; ſuch a deficiency as he has received no advantage from. When we conſider how much every trade of this nature muſt be in the hands of ſervants, for whoſe miſconduct, and even error, every maſter is by the laws of his country rendered liable; we may ſafely

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pronounce no baker to have paſſed a month in buſineſs, without being liable to ſuffer the penalties of the act for ſhort weight in ſome of the thouſand loaves he has ſold in that period, and that without the ſmalleſt intention of defrauding his cuſtomers, and who, if they have been conſtantly ſerved by him, have, on the whole, had more than juſtice done them in the weight they have received. In the very ſmall ſized loaves this is peculiarly liable to be the caſe. In the ſerving by a very conſcientious baker, of a great number of loaves of a pound weight, I have experienced the truth of this remark—a loaf here and there was deficient in weight, but twenty put into the ſcale at once invariably weighed to the full as much as was required.

Nor is this peculiar to the baker's ſituation. Do we not witneſs in the article of hay the ſelfſame liability to error, and conſequently to penalty.—Every truſs muſt by law weigh 56lb.—Did any man ever buy hay for any length of time, and for his ſatisfaction weigh every truſs, who has found them the preciſe weight required? If he found one weighing 54lb. only, and three others next in the ſcale 57lb. each, would he feel juſtified in laying an information againſt the ſeller for deficiency in the one truſs, when he was a gainer upon the four? and yet he would be entitled to do ſo.—With ſuch meaſure of ſtrict juſtice, and groſs injuſtice, every

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gentleman or farmer might be held up to public reproach as the defrauder of his fellow-creatures.

I am well aware that in an article like bread, and eſpecially in theſe times, the intereſt of the poor requires that a watchful eye ſhould be kept over thoſe who ſupply them with their daily nouriſhment; and how ſtrictly exact every baker ought to be in the diviſion of his materials according to legal preſcription. I only apply this mode of reaſoning to ſhew, that ſomething even leſs blameable than negligence, may exhibit men to the public in a light they do not deſerve; and that in the ſentence of a conviction, rendered neceſſary by the imperious call of public intereſt, you do not always read that to which a man of liberal feeling would affix *guilt*, in which, *intention* is a neceſſary ingredient.

Nor let us liſten altogether to the ideas circulated of their immenſe profits. On this there can be no doubt, becauſe it is reduced to a certainty, and with which every man may acquaint himſelf.—It is an handſome, ſteady profit, not more than commenſurate to the riſk he runs from bad debts, and bad uſage; nor more than his trading neighbours think themſelves entitled to. If it were not what it is, who would undertake it? Thoſe trades wherein many articles are ſold, all unlimited in their price, may be carried on with little or no profit as to ſome, becauſe the vaſt profit on others may amply ſupply the deficiency. If the common tradeſman finds to-day cloudy, to-

morrow

morrow may be ſunſhine—he loſes on one article—he gains greatly on another; but with the Baker it is not ſo; his trade is all dull November weather; he jogs on in an even courſe, and all his hopes are, that by the ſtricteſt watchfulneſs, he may preſerve his cuſtomers, and his character, and in theſe times of dearneſs of every article of life, may keep his head above water, and in theſe times of prejudice, preſerve himſelf ſafe from the lamp-iron.

I verily believe that this is the truth as to 19 out of 20 of the trade. I feel ſatisfied that I am exaggerating, rather than diminiſhing the wealth of this claſs, when I give it as my opinion, (the reſult of enquiries too long to detail) that if the property of all this trade could be got at, it would not average more than 500*l.* each individual—I queſtion if as much. If this is the fact, what muſt we think of their exceſſive profits!

But it has not been only out of doors that the clamour has been raiſed againſt the Bakers.—Whilſt they have been hanging him in effigy without doors, they have been preparing the rack for him within. This band of patriots, whom I have before alluded to—who are to ſcreen the country from the rapacity of the Millers—are to ſave the public from the dreadful effects produced by the obſtinacy of the Bakers.—"Can it be tolerated, (ſay they) that in theſe times of neceſſary œconomy, when every great man finds it neceſſary to

regulate

regulate the very appetites of his houſehold—to apportion their very hunger to the times—when not only the quantity, but the quality of food is an object of juſt conſideration—that theſe men, ſo liberally and nobly treated as they have been by the public—who have it now in their power effectually to manifeſt their gratitude, ſhould ſtill obſtinately and wickedly refuſe to *bake houſehold bread.*"

In vain have the Bakers replied to this heavy charge: "We ſhould like much to bake brown bread, if you will in the firſt place allow us as good a profit on it, as on white; and in the ſecond, when we have baked it, will only perſuade the people to eat it."

In vain has *one Baker ſtated on oath, that the majority of his cuſtomers will not eat it—that the making of it is not as profitable—that the people who in the country are ſaid to like brown bread, change their taſte with the climate—and "forſooth become dainty when they arrive in London"—that the †Commiſſary's Flour (as produced before the Committee) might make Bread that ſoldiers on their march *could* eat, who could get no other; but that even ſoldiers would not purchaſe it in London at *any* price. In vain has ‡another Baker aſſured theſe projectors, that his cuſtomers

* Mr. Loveland, of Alderſgate Street.

† Mr. Brook Watſon.

‡ Mr. Johnſton, of the Strand.

have

have a fooliſh idea of not being able to work, with brown bread, as well as with white; and that having by miſtake once mixed not quite half the quantity of ſtandard wheaten Flour with his ſeconds, his cuſtomers would not have his Bread, though he tempted them with an abatement in price, of one-penny per quartern loaf.—And in vain has an eminent *phyſician given his opinion, that though brown bread may be as wholeſome, yet it is not as nutritive as white; and that to do their uſual work, the people muſt have a greater quantity of it. All this has this been ſaid to them, and much more—the impreſſion is nothing—they will not believe it—they anſwer, "It is all, all prejudice. Brown bread is more nutritive, more palatable, more ſuited to the conſtitution of Engliſhmen, (who require a little acidity to correct their phlegm) and more profitable for the Bakers, than white. The people only fancy they don't like it—we know that they do—they ſhall have it, and if you cannot make them eat it, we can;—we know that you have ſuch a diſlike to making it, that if you were allowed an equal profit, you would play ſome tricks with it to diſguſt the public, and therefore we will erect an oven and bake it ourſelves."

To language ſo dictatorial, and backed by Parliamentary ſanction, what can the Bakers oppoſe?—

* Dr. Lettſom.

they have brought forward facts—they cannot be expected to find faith for their opponents. In the progreſs of the bill, however, through the Upper Houſe, it occurred to ſome who exerciſed their reaſon and candour, how groſsly harſh it muſt appear to conſiderate and unbiaſſed men, that whilſt the bill held out encouragement to a vaſt body to ſend out it's thouſands of loaves, at any price they choſe to fix on them, without laying them under any reſtrictions of returns or aſſize, the Baker ſhould not be permitted, at a moderate profit, to offer the ſame article to his cuſtomers. This conſideration has produced a clauſe, to allow the Baker the ſame liberty of ſelling houſehold bread, at an aſſize *regulated by the magiſtrate*. To be ſure the boon is not the moſt liberal, and the diſtinction made between the parties not imperceptible; all is left to the patriotiſm of one, but the other they will not truſt even in this article.

What I have before ſaid as to the little danger to be apprehended by the millers from this vaſt company, is applicable to the Bakers. They have no occaſion to fear this Coloſſal Brown Bread Oven—they have no reaſon to be alarmed;—if they go on with their project, the Bakers will effectually be benefited. This experiment to cram down the throats of the public a mixture they don't like, will not, in my opinion, ſucceed. They will have to encounter the public prejudice in their trial; and if they are ſucceſsful, it will be time enough

for

for the Bakers to begin; if not, they are ſaved the diſcredit, as well as the expence of the attempt. If the bread comes into general uſe, the public will give the preference to the Baker, if the commodity is equally good; and it is much more likely that the ſmall quantity they make will preſerve it's uniform good quality, than the immenſe batch neceſſary for the Company's oven. It is probable that in the outſet, the proprietors will ſtrain every nerve to extend the ſale of their article.—For a time the Bakers may have cauſe for alarm; the novelty of the thing will attract attention, and induce trial. The public ſpirit of theſe ſpeculators—the ſervices they are rendering the community—the excellent quality of their bread, will be perhaps the theme of general diſcourſe, and may reverberate through the circles of this great city. But the novelty will ſoon ceaſe, and with it the effect. One or two batches of indifferent bread (and ſuch they muſt expect now and then) will turn the current of public ſentiment into a direction unfavourable to them. The public praiſe will grow luke-warm—in time it will produce indifference, if not diſguſt. The inſtant this becomes the caſe, their oven will ſcarcely find employment to pay for the fuel of it; they will not find it worth while to continue it, and the Bakers will hear no more of this Brown Bread ſcheme, than if it had never exiſted to torment and alarm them, except they hear of it in an application to

Parliament for indemnity for the damages the Company have ſuſtained from muſty corn, and mouldy bread, thrown upon their hands, in conſequence of their patriotic and diſintereſted exertions to ſerve the Public.

One word more before I take leave of the Bakers; not in their defence, for they need it not. The King has not more peaceable induſtrious ſubjects, nor the people more valuable friends. The proviſion in the Bill given as a douceur to the Bakers, appears to me exceedingly abſurd, and in it's preſent ſtate impracticable. The principle of giving to individuals (however reſpectable) a power to regulate the aſſize of the article, without ſome fixed rule to direct their judgment, is moſt dangerous. Little inclined as I am to favor any aſſize of Bread, if we are to have one, let it be a fixed one, depending on the price of the article you manufacture it from, not at the will of the magiſtrate. I am not afraid that the magiſtrate will be influenced by improper motives, but he is very liable to act from wrong information, or intereſted miſrepreſentation. The effect will be, that if he exerciſes his judgment at all, and does not invariably follow the conduct of ſome other magiſtrate, who gives the example to his brethren, there will be different prices of the ſame loaf in diſtricts immediately adjoining each other.—If the aſſize ſet by the Lord Mayor of London, is to be the guide for all the neighbouring counties (and

moſt

moſt likely it would be) the weight of reſponſibility thrown upon him is immenſe—and you ſubject him to imputations and occaſionally to an odium, which can ſcarcely be wiſhed.

Under theſe circumſtances, I think there will be much difficulty in giving this intended boon to the bakers. What objection would there have been after the evidence that has been given upon oath, of the leſſer profit, on baking a ſack of ſtandard wheaten flower into bread, than of ſeconds, to aſcertain the difference with ſome preciſion, and to permit the aſſize on the brown bread to be ſomewhat raiſed. If there was no other reaſon, why it ſhould be higher, the difficulty of forcing its way to the public, and the loſs that may be occaſionally ſuſtained in its progreſs to it, is ſurely a ſufficient one.

I have now done with the dealers, in the home produce of this article.—Let us give a few pages to thoſe who deal principally in the foreign ſupply, as the merchant importer, the corn factor, and the dealer or jobber in corn.—

And firſt of the

MERCHANT IMPORTER.

I ſhall not riſk much in aſſerting that amongſt all the reſpectable claſs of merchants, which this opulent nation has the honour to boaſt of, and

to

to whom the country is in a great meaſure indebted, for the proud rank ſhe holds amongſt nations, there is not one to whom, at this inſtant of time, the public gratitude is more due than to the importer of foreign wheat. To his ſpirited and laudable efforts, do we owe for theſe laſt ſix months, the public tranquility; but for him thoſe clamours raiſed againſt the high price of bread, would have been lifted up with reaſon againſt the actual want of it; but for him for many weeks, with all the œconomy we have practiſed, and all the retrenchments we have made, *there would have been none to eat*. Look at the Cuſtom-Houſe books, and you will be ſatisfied of the truth of this ſtatement. In ſpite of the ill treatment they had received on a former occaſion—notwithſtanding the loſſes, which they have ſuſtained from the fall of corn in 1796, after they had liberated the country by their unparalleled exertions, from the dangers of famine—though their application for indemnity on that occaſion was neglected; yet the inſtant they were aſſured from the report of the Committee of the Houſe of Commons reſpecting Corn, &c. made in February, " that government would abſtain from all interference, in the purchaſes of corn, in the foreign markets"—as ſoon as they felt ſatisfied that the heavy purſe of government would not be brought into the market to rival their ſpeculations; they loſt no time, in again flying to the public aſſiſtance, to relieve their neceſſities.

The

The vaſt importation, unprecedented in the ſame period of time, manifeſts the great and active exertions they muſt have made.

Yet theſe are objects peculiarly ſelected for public obloquy—theſe are the people to whom the voice of prejudice has imputed the cruel attempt to raiſe the price of wheat, by keeping it back from the public. "The hoards they have locked up, (ſay the ignorant and deluded public) are exceſſive; ſcarcely a warehouſe, that borders upon the Thames, but is filled with their wheat; ſo determined are they to keep it back from the people, that though their warehouſes are groaning under the vaſt weight of it, they are not content with this monopoly within doors, but the veſſels which arrive are kept unloaded for the ſame wicked purpoſe. Our eyes are daily inſulted, with the crowds of labourers they employ, for the ſole purpoſe of turning the corn, which is in danger of ſpoiling from their avarice; nay, rather than permit us to have it at a reaſonable price, they have ſuffered a great part, abſolutely to ſpoil on their hands, and they have been obliged to throw it away."

Such, and far more abſurd, have been the charges made, and the ſtories in circulation, againſt this reſpectable body of men, in the courſe of the ſpring and ſummer—ſtories ſo abſurd, but yet ſo dangerous in their conſequences, that it is impoſſible to treat them as they deſerve. What, becauſe you call thoſe men monopoliſts, do you think them

fools?

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fools?

fools? Can you ſeriouſly imagine, that men however wicked, will ſo far forget their intereſt, as to ſuffer a commodity to periſh on their hands, when the price is ſo extenſive as to afford them an handſome profit—much more will you think them ſuch ideots, as to deſtroy a commodity for which they can obtain any price? Is this conſiſtent with a charge of avarice? Is this probable with men whom you accuſe of an avidity for gain?

But how are theſe charges ſupported by facts—we will examine them with that attention which they really deſerve, from the importance which their being eſtabliſhed or confuted, is, to the future peace and welfare of ſociety. And I will ſet out with conceding, that there have been in the courſe of the laſt ſpring and ſummer frequently conſiderable quantities of foreign wheat, warehouſed by the merchants, not frequently from 50 to 80,000 quarters, and this at a time when the price of wheat was as high as 6*l.* per quarter—that they have kept it up in the warehouſes, and dealt it out with a moſt ſparing, and apparently parſimonious hand to the public—that there has been a great quantity in the lighterman's barges, which may have met the public eye in the act of turning—and a very conſiderable, and highly to be lamented quantity, ſo ſpoiled as to be utterly unfit for the uſe of man. All this I will allow—the ſtatement in ſubſtance (except that of throwing any quantity, even a grain away) I am afraid is too true; the

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inference that is drawn from the premiſes no leſs falſe. Let us attempt to find the cauſes by examining this branch of the ſubject with a little attention.

From the north of Europe this country derives thoſe ſupplies of grain, which in a greater or leſs degree ſhe has for many years ſtood in need of. The chief importations are from Poland, Pruſſia, Ruſſia and Denmark; the moſt conſiderable part from the two former. A ſmall quantity of wheat is ſent from Canada (about three years ſince there was a conſiderable importation from thence which turned out very bad) and ſome little from America; but the Americans chiefly export it in the ſtate of flour, both from the advantage which the country receives in manufacturing its own wheat into flour, as well as from the freight being leſs, and the article in this ſhape (being ſent over in barrels) keeping better in ſo long a voyage. It may be conſidered however, that the chief dependence of this country for her importation of corn, in times of ſcarcity, is from the northern powers. It is very well known that the harveſt of 1799, throughout the north of Europe, was even worſe than in this country—in quantity far from abundant—in quality moſt wretched. This was particularly the caſe in Poliſh Pruſſia, in all thoſe provinces bordering on the Baltick; the harveſt there was uncommonly late and long, and the continued autumnal rains after the corn was cut, ſent it into

the barns cold and chilly. Its ſtate was little better when it came out from thence, nor was it improved by the long detention in port of the veſſels on board of which it was ſhipped for this country, either by the ſeverity of the ſeaſon, or from want of convoy. On its voyage too, it encountered adverſe winds—In many inſtances, the veſſels were three times the uſual length of time on their paſſage. All theſe cauſes, united with the original unſound ſtate of it, rendered a great part of the grain on its arrival totally unfit for uſe. Many veſſels which arrived in the months of April and May, had the whole of their cargoes in a ſtate, not only unfit for immediate uſe, but very unlikely ever to become uſeable. Thoſe cargoes which arrived in a ſtate fit for ſale, were immediately diſpoſed of in the ſhip, either to the millers or to thoſe factors who had orders for the coaſt. Thoſe which were in a damaged ſtate were inſtantly landed, and the importer obliged to be at the expence, and certain loſs, of kiln-drying a part, which when mixed with the remainder rendered the whole in about a week or fortnight, fit for uſe. It was then immediately taken to market, and the millers by mixing it with Engliſh wheat, were enabled to make very tolerable flour of it. A great part however was too far gone to be reſtored, and this has remained an heavy burden and loſs to the importer.

Every man who knows any thing of the nature of wheat will readily conceive in how wretched a ſtate

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it was probable that wheat would arrive, which when ſhipped was ſoft and cold, and unfit for the grind ſtone, after lying three months in the hold of ſhip, in quantity ſometimes to the amount of 2500 quarters—and how improbable it muſt be that on its arrival it could have been uſed by the trade.—Greatly exaggerated as the quantity has been, it is a ſubject for regret that there has even been ſo much warehouſed as there has been. I have conſidered it ſo important to aſcertain the quality and quantity of the corn ſo warehouſed, from its having formed the general topic of converſation, that I have neglected no pains to obtain it. The reſult of the information I have received from ſources, which juſtify my ſtating it with confidence, is, that according to the neareſt eſtimate, which the nature of the thing will admit of, the quantity warehouſed at the moment of the diſturbances in London, did not exceed from 60 to 70,000 quarters, that two thirds alone of it, was in a ſtate either for preſent or future uſe, and that the remaining third could only be brought into uſe, for fattening of cattle or hogs; and that the merchants have ſuſtained very conſiderable loſſes from being obliged to warehouſe their corn, ſo much ſo, as to make it probable, they will upon the whole be loſers by their ſpeculation.

If this ſtatement is not contradicted (and I am well aſſured it cannot) what muſt we think of the idle charges of monopoly applied ſo confidently to the

merchants; and what of the immenſe hoards, which their avarice has kept back from the people. The quantity thus warehouſed that can be uſed for flour if it were as ſound as it is the contrary, would when manufactured into flour, furniſh a ſupply equal to three weeks conſumption of the metropolis alone. Now I will leave it to the judgment of my readers, whether it is not rather a circumſtance of ſatisfaction, than diſguſt—rather demanding our gratitude, than our reproaches towards the importers; that they have reſerved even this ſmall pittance for you, when the home markets have ſo ſcanty a ſupply? Have not the inhabitants of the metropolis and its neighbourhood, much cauſe of conſolation, in a circumſtance, which has excited the reſentment of many of them? If the importers keep back (as is ſuppoſed) this quantity from conſumption, or deal it out with a ſparing and even niggardly hand, to feed their avarice, inſtead of feeding the people, the public intereſt (however unintentionally on their part) would be promoted by it; inſtead of ſupplying the ſcantineſs of a few markets, it would contribute to make good the deficiency of many; withheld when the ſupply was tolerable in quantity, it would furniſh a reſource in actual want. The advantage of ſuch a conduct (whatever might be their motives) is incalculable; ſo true is it, that this monopoly of which we all complain—which forms the baſis of public clamour, which alike conſtitutes

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the ſubſtance of the grave addreſſes of Judges, and the intemperate harangues of counſel, to juries—as well as of inconſiderate appeals to the paſſions of the people, by their betters, in the reſolutions and ſtatements of the day—would, if true, be our beſt protection againſt the dreadful horrors of famine. Inſtead of lamenting the circumſtance, would to God theſe hoards had been increaſed ten fold! We ſhould then never have ſeen wheat at 7*l.* the load, or the quartern loaf at 1*s.* 6*d.*

Do not imagine that in confining my defence of the merchants to the monopoly of foreign wheats, I am ignorant of the ſtrong idea which the people have entertained, that the warehouſes, ſo loaded as before ſtated, have had in them a conſiderable quantity of Engliſh wheat, bought upon ſpeculation—hoarded up for a better price—kept till mouldy and unfit for uſe—and then thrown (like the foreign wheat) into the Thames.

I ſhall not repeat my obſervations on the abſurdity of this idea, but I ſhall anſwer it with this broad fact, *that Engliſh corn is not warehouſed, but on its arrival, ſold to the miller for immediate manufacture.* I am informed by a gentleman, on whoſe veracity and honour I can ſafely rely, and for which I would pledge myſelf to the public, (and who has beſides the means of information) that in the whole of the laſt eight months, he has neither known from his own experience, nor has been able to find from enquiry an inſtance of a ſingle quarter of Engliſh wheat warehouſed.

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I do not ſay that the information of any one man on a ſubject in its operation ſo extenſive, is ſufficient to ſatisfy the public, that in no inſtance Engliſh wheat has been warehouſed; but it is concluſive, *that ſuch is not the practice*—and that is a ſufficient anſwer to the charge.

The accuſation therefore of Monopoly in its application to the conduct of the merchants for the laſt eight months has I truſt been completely refuted. There never has been ſufficient in the warehouſes during that period, to conſtitute what in the preſent day, and under the preſent conſumption can be termed monopoly; and that which has been ſo withheld, has been from neceſſity, not choice—to the certain injury—not to the poſſible advantage, of thoſe who have ſo withheld it.

But ſatisfactory as I truſt will be this anſwer to the majority of my readers, there may be ſome few (and thoſe with no bad intentions, but deeply rooted in prejudice) ſo wedded to their opinions, and ſo miſinformed, as to take advantage of the conceſſion of the charge of warehouſing the corn, and not ſatisfied with the mode of accounting for it, may imagine, that the damaged ſtate was the conſequence, not the cauſe, of warehouſing it.

Though I am aſſured by thoſe, through whoſe hands a *very* conſiderable part of it has paſſed from the veſſels to the warehouſes, and from thoſe in whoſe cuſtody it has been placed, that its quality was as I have ſtated—after having oppoſed the aſſertion of thoſe who *muſt* know, to that of thoſe

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whoſe information has been derived from men, who *may* not know the truth: it is only left for me to appeal to the reaſon of the thing and the probability on which ſide the truth is.

It has been before obſerved by me, that every man may be ſuppoſed to have a motive for his conduct. It will be, I doubt not, acknowledged that the only ſufficient motive in this caſe muſt be intereſt—that it can be no other. Let us then try it by this teſt.

As ſoon as a merchant has a cargo of wheat come into the river, if he finds it fit for ſale, he has nothing to do, but to take a ſample to his factors, and it is inſtantly ſold. The expence to him after its arrival is in this caſe trifling. If on the contrary (ſuppoſe it from any cauſe you will) he lands it, the expences are 1*s*. per quarter for lighterage, meterage and porterage, in conveying it from the veſſel to the warehouſe, and the expence of warehouſe room 4*s*. 6*d*. per week, for every 100 quarters. This is not the only loſs; for ſome additional ariſes from the natural waſte, occaſioned by the two removals, and ſome from re-meaſuring. This is the leaſt expence he will or can ſuſtain—If however, either from the ſtate of the article when landed, or from its natural inclination to muſt, from length of keeping, when in any large quantity, it requires to be kiln-dried, a further charge ariſes of 2*s*. per quarter incured by this operation. I have calculated with ſome degree of nicety from

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the information I have been able to attain, the average loſs to the merchant, from this proceſs, to which ſo much of the foreign wheat has been ſubjected, and I believe myſelf to be rather within the mark when I ſtate it not to be leſs than from *7 to* 8 *per cent.*—A ſevere drawback on profit!

If however his cargo arrives in a ſtate not quite fit for immediate ſale, and yet with no neceſſity for either warehouſing or kiln-drying it; he then takes a middling courſe, and ſhifts it from the veſſel, which has brought it, into the lighterman's craft, without landing it: he then muſters all the hands he can procure, to dry it, by keeping it conſtantly turned. Theſe are the labourers, who are to be ſeen daily and hourly on the Thames, occupied in this proceſs which has ſo alarmed the public, and who whilſt they were preparing that corn for inſtant ſale, which had not entered the ports 48 hours, were ſuppoſed to have been attempting the recovery of wheat, which, for the want of room that avarice had pre-engaged, was entirely, or in a great degree ſpoiled.

But though this is a conſiderable ſaving of expence, it is attended with ſome. The merchant ſaves by this half landing, 1*s.* per quarter, provided it is ſold and taken from the barges in a week. If however his judgment ſhould have failed him in the firſt inſtance, or many circumſtances beyond his controul ſhould have prevented the ſucceſs of his attempts to render it fit for ſale, within the

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time limited, his charges will advance ſo conſiderably for every ſubſequent week that it remains there, that it would have been more for his intereſt to have landed it at firſt; and every day that he keeps it from the public muſt be a day of ſorrow and loſs to him. Thus, under no circumſtances but of immediate ſale, can the merchant avoid a ſerious and unthought of expence.

Is it then to be credited, that any man under the accumulated expences I have ſtated, who could avoid them all by bringing his corn inſtantly to market, would not do it? Is it in the leaſt probable, that at a time when wheat is 6*l.* per quarter, the merchant ſhould ſo little conſult his apparent intereſt, as to land and warehouſe his corn under the expences already ſtated? (not forgetting the very ſerious additional one from the loſs of intereſt on his capital) on a ſpeculation ſo abſurd as an higher price, when the article is already ſo extravagantly dear? We muſt have an unaccountable portion of credulity to give our belief to ſuch an idea. The ſuppoſition is itſelf improbable, if the *fact* was not directly the reverſe.

Believe me, it is not ſo, my countrymen.—Theſe men, whom you have injured by ſuſpicion as unfounded as miſchievous, have ſerved you with an active and liberal ſpirit, which deſerves your gratitude, not your reproaches. To them you are indebted for the bread you are at this moment eating—but for them, inſtead of complaining (and

juſtly) of its price, you would be vainly ſearching for the article—inſtead of declaiming againſt even its quality (which by the bye has been rendered as good as it is by their active exertions) you would feel the ſad deficiency in quantity. They cannot help the ſtate in which it arrives. The injury to them from this circumſtance is exceſſive—it has robbed them of their profits and ſubjected them to ſevere loſs.—Increaſe not then the ſeverity by your unworthy ſuſpicions.

Think not that they cannot bring forward proofs of the zeal with which they have adventured in your cauſe. Look at the following ſtatement of the imports of corn from January to September, and you will be ſatisfied of the extent of their ſervices to you.

An account of the quantity of foreign grain, meal, and flour, imported into England between the 5th of January 1800, *and the 1ſt of September following*:

		Qrs.	*bu.*	
Wheat —	—	721,993	4	
		Cwt.	*qr.*	*lb.*
—— Flour	—	176,292	1	20
		Qrs.	*bu.*	
Rye —	—	114,176	3	
		Cwt.	*qrs.*	
—— Meal	—	11,882	3	
		Qrs.	*bu.*	
Indian —	—	4,179	1	

Meal

			Cwt.	
—— Meal	—		425	
			Qrs.	*bu.*
Barley	—	—	33,284	1
Beans	—	—	11,159	3
Oats	—	—	308,347	
Peas	—	—	10,071	3
			Bolls.	
Oatmeal	—	—	1,165	

When we peruſe this ſtatement (for the correctneſs of which I will vouch) does it not appear aſtoniſhing, that ſuch efforts in ſo ſhort a period could have been made? In no country but this, and by no merchants but thoſe which England boaſts, could it have been effected. When the average imports in wheat for the preceding four years, have not been 540,000 *for the whole year*; and one of theſe years, a year of great ſcarcity, what muſt we think of 720,000 quarters (excluſive of Indian wheat) imported in *eight months*? One cannot by argument add to the weight of this fact, nor to the merit which the merchant may juſtly lay claim to.

Reflect then, I intreat you, before it be too late, on the importance of encouraging this valuable ſpirit of enterprize. The diſappointments which the merchants have already experienced, the proſpect of future loſs, which the bad ſtate of the grain and the expences of keeping it preſent, together

with the recollection of the treatment they formerly experienced from government, require that the public ſhould rather excite than damp their ardor to ſerve them. Conſult your own intereſts, and let no one perſuade you that clamour is truth, or aſſertion fact. Be aſſured that the public prejudice directed againſt this body will recoil upon itſelf—always dangerous in its progreſs, it is moſt alarming in this. Think not that the high price of bread is likely to be diminiſhed by checking the inclination of the merchant to riſk his capital in importing it, or by thoſe groundleſs ſuſpicions of his conduct, and charges of monopoly, which if encouraged, muſt have the effect of raiſing the price inſtead of lowering it; for which of the various branches through which it paſſes in its progreſs from the veſſel to the baker's ſhop, will not think himſelf (and reaſonably ſo) entitled to extra remuneration for the riſk he runs, from public prejudice, whilſt the article is paſſing through his hands.

THE CORN FACTOR.

I ſhall not extend this pamphlet (which will become more bulky before I have finiſhed it than I intended or could have imagined) by obſervations at any length on this branch of the Trade. I am informed it includes in it men of worth and of property, many reſpectable and induſtrious members

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of ſociety. But what I have ſaid of the Flour Factors, is, in principle, applicable to them.—Their buſineſs is with commiſſion not ſpeculation. The greater the plenty of corn at market, the more they ſell and the greater their profits. It is evident that their intereſt is to bring it forwards, not to keep it back—to increaſe their commiſſions, not to diminiſh them.

I underſtand that ſometimes the factor has corn to ſell on his own account, but that is a very rare caſe, and to no conſiderable extent.—However, if that be the caſe, the public can ſuſtain no injury—for after what I have ſtated of the ſmall quantity warehouſed at all, and which, in the aggregate, could ſcarcely be thought dangerous as a monopoly in the hand of one or a few merchants, the danger would be much leſſened by a diviſion of ownerſhip amongſt another and a numerous claſs of perſons in the Trade, if the fact were ſo.

Nothing but prejudice could bring a ſerious charge of injuring the public, againſt theſe perſons. That they are included, can only be accounted for, becauſe they are concerned in a Trade which ſupplies the daily wants of men, not on thoſe terms on which they like to be ſupplied. They muſt be content to have their ſhare of reproach, and muſt conſole themſelves under a conſciouſneſs of not having deſerved it.

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THE LIGHTERMAN AND WAREHOUSEMAN.

I have taken theſe together, becauſe the employments of the lighterman and warehouſeman are uſually found united in the ſame perſon; and nothing but a conviction in my mind (warranted by the experience of the laſt month) that every claſs of perſons in the remoteſt degree connected with the corn trade are at this moment of popular reſentment compriſed in the obloquy ſo liberally dealt out to the trade in general, could induce me to take up the time of my reader, or to offer theſe gentlemen the apparent affront I do, in conſidering it neceſſary to defend them from an imputation of their being monopoliſts. One ſhould have thought it impoſſible that men, who from the nature of their buſineſs, muſt be merely agents of others, could be the ſubject of a charge ſo extraordinary; yet the very circumſtance of their keeping a barge to land, or a warehouſe to contain corn; the having one employed, and the other filled, is ſufficient (in theſe times of general prejudice againſt the trade) to mark them out as objects of public reproach. A great deal of this ariſes from general ignorance of the nature of their employ. It is only underſtood by men converſant in buſineſs; and perhaps limited, in a great meaſure, even to thoſe in the neighbourhood of the metropolis.

tropolis. The bulk of the people throughout England conſider the man who has his barges and warehouſes laden with corn as a great and alarming monopoliſt, who has landed all he could to keep it from conſumption, till the price equals the demands of his avarice, reſerving till that period in his barges for the ſame wicked purpoſes that which his warehouſes could not contain.—No inquiry is made to whom the corn belongs. He and his men are conſtantly employed about it; and they deem it impoſſible (perhaps the higheſt compliment that can be paid him) ſo much active induſtry could be exerted for the benefit of another's property. The fact of poſſeſſion conſtitutes his crime; and ſatisfied of this, the public make no further inquiries. One ſhould ſcarcely have believed that this could have been the caſe in the neighbourhood of the Trade, where every man might have made himſelf acquainted with its nature, had it not been eſtabliſhed beyond a doubt by the language and conduct of the mob who aſſembled in Mark-lane on the 15th of September. The terms of reproach and inſult ſo liberally beſtowed on the trade in general, were far from excluding the above claſs; and if the efforts of the civil power had been ultimately too weak to have repreſſed the commotion, the lighterman and warehouſeman would have been amongſt the firſt objects of public vengeance. 'Why don't you let 'us have the wheat you have got in your barges

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'and warehouſes, inſtead of hoarding it up till it 'is ſpoiled?' was the addreſs of the mob to the gentlemen concerned in this trade, as they paſſed to the Corn Exchange. You could not take a boat on the water, between Black-friar's-bridge and Lime-houſe, the owner of which did not entertain you on your paſſage with ſimilar complaints; pointing out the warehouſes and barges ſo ſtored—imputing ſimilar honourable motives to the owners, and mentioning many of them by name.—Nor was it in the ſtreets only that language of this tenor was uſed; at the tables of well-informed men were daily to be heard invectives againſt the owners of veſſels and warehouſes ſtored with corn, repreſenting them as gorging themſelves to the full with the article, and combining with the reſt of the trade to raiſe the price.—In ſuch places you had even an attempt at reaſoning on the ſubject—Driven from the ſtrong hold which the common people have taken, that poſſeſſion is the proof of property, and the only neceſſary evidence to evince the guilt of the poſſeſſors; they argued the ſubject as if the explanation of the nature of their buſineſs was inconcluſive to eſtabliſh their innocence. "It is im-'poſſible to believe (ſay they) that with the oppor-'tunities theſe men have, when their craft is unem-'ployed and their warehouſes unfilled, they ſhould 'not ſpeculate in Corn on their own account." Arguing on the probability of ſuch a conduct, one might urge, that in the preſent enlarged ſtate of the

the importation of Corn during the laſt ſpring and ſummer (and for the truth of which I refer my readers to the ſtatement I have before given,) there is no doubt but the conſtant demand for lighterage and warehouſe room would find employment for the moſt numerous craft, and extenſive warehouſes, that the trade could furniſh; that the very attention neceſſary to ſpeculation, would be in a great degree inconſiſtent with the perſonal care neceſſary, (and uniformly to be found) in this line of buſineſs; and that the inconvenience they would probably ſuſtain, from not being able to accommodate their cuſtomers, by employing their veſſels and filling their granaries with their own corn, would ſubject them to greater certain loſs than could be compenſated by any proſpect of gain, under prices ſo exceſſive as the preſent.

It is in vain to uſe theſe arguments (which appear to be ſo concluſive) to many; the anſwer is "We do not underſtand the nature of their buſineſs, nor the intereſt they have in not deviating from it; but we have no doubt that theſe men are links in the ſame chain of dreadful monopoly and of cruel combination to raiſe the price of corn."

Such is their language—Such are their arguments.

Nor is it only amongſt the uninformed on ſubjects of buſineſs, that this idea has been encouraged. I have heard reſpectable tradeſmen relate the immenſe quantities of corn, hoarded by men in

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their warehouſes on the river, to which they attributed the preſent ſcarcity, and ſtating by name the perſons ſo accuſed; who on enquiry turned out to be mere warehouſemen not intereſted in one grain of the corn ſo houſed. In the courſe of the autumn, a report was circulated at firſt in ſelf-important but low whiſpers, and afterwards increaſed in openneſs and extended circulation, of one gentleman in moſt extenſive employment, as a lighterman and warehouſeman, and to whoſe warehouſes, or to whoſe care the greateſt part of the foreign wheat has been committed, who was enjoying a few days relaxation from buſineſs at a watering place, having abſconded for fear of proſecution for monopoly; and he had no means of recovering his credit, and refuting the charge, than by quitting the ſociety he was enjoying, and recording his appearance at the corn exchange, as well as at every other place where publicity could attend his appearance*.

But

* This reminds one of a ſimilar report at the ſame time, which had for its object a worthy alderman (in whoſe company the above gentleman was reported to have abſconded) ſaid to have fled to the Continent, to avoid the public reſentment, excited againſt him, from being ſuppoſed inſtrumental to the then ſcarcity, by the monopoly he had effected of foreign wheat for exportation. This rumour, from the, diſtance might not reach him abroad; but on his return it is ſaid that he found himſelf compelled to eat and drink

his

But ſo unaccountable is prejudice, ſo miſdirected in all its objects, and ſo careleſs of enquiring its foundation that whilſt we lament, we ceaſe to wonder at its operations. How elſe can we reconcile the charges of monopoly, as applied to this trade, the nature of which one ſhould have thought, would have diſarmed ſuſpicion of every thing on which it could have faſtened. If I am to judge generally of this claſs by thoſe of it whom I do know, they ſuſtain a very different character in ſociety,

his way to innocence, through the Taverns and public places of London and its vicinity. This to many perſons (eſpecially under the extreme heat of the weather) might have been attended with ſerious effects; perhaps this ſpecies of fiery ordeal could not have met two gentlemen ſo prepared to endure it. The natural conviviality of their temper and habits, together with conſtitutions not utterly unuſed to ſuch *hardſhips*, were protections againſt the ſerious injury that others might have found. May they long be enabled to partake of thoſe convivialities to which they do ſo much credit, and to exerciſe that hoſpitality which honourable and ſucceſsfully-directed induſtry, has entitled them to command, unruffled by charges, they know and feel, cannot be deſerved by them, or by imputations which only diſgrace thoſe who bring them!

Before I cloſe this note, let me remark as a proof how generally prejudice confounds its objects, that the wheat ſaid to be hoarded up by this gentleman and his partners, could not have amounted to more than 50 *quarters* even by poſſibility, as that is the full amount purchaſed by the houſe in the period of the laſt *fifteen months*, either on account of themſelves or any other perſon; either directly, or indirectly.

than that of enemies to the public intereſt, or of improper attention to their own. To an unremitting, and occaſionally moſt toilſome application to the buſineſs of their employers, always directed to the public advantage, and particularly ſo at this moment, they unite the liberal, enlarged ſpirit of the Engliſh Merchant. The national ſtock of induſtry receives no little acceſſion from them. The expedition with which they unload the veſſels of grain on their arrival in the river, and the perſonal attention and care, which they beſtow on it, in its progreſs to, and whilſt it is in their warehouſes, entitles them (perhaps at this time more than at any other) not only to the thanks of their employers, but to the gratitude of the people: who may be aſſured, that ſcanty and ſlow as has been the ſupply of foreign corn brought to the market, it would have been much more ſcanty, and the quality ſtill more indifferent, had it not been for theſe gentlemen, againſt whom, in that ſpirit of indiſcriminate reproach, which is the unhappy faſhion of the day, has been advanced the ſerious charge of contributing to the public diſtreſs—a charge which nothing but the extreme of wickedneſs or ignorance could bring, or of folly and credulity for a moment liſten to.

I will not offend them by extending their defence.

THE JOBBER OR MIDDLE MAN.

I hear my readers exclaim, "What will you undertake the defence of theſe men too? Will you attempt to convince the public, that theſe objects of general indignation, owe that indignation to prejudice and ignorance—that men whoſe notoriety of combination to enhance the prices of all kinds of proviſions, and eſpecially of corn, admits of no contradiction, are not the enemies of the public—the oppreſſors of the poor—the peſts of ſociety? Can you attempt the defence of men, whoſe crimes ſtand on record—whoſe convictions meet you in every ſtreet and alley of the metropolis—againſt whoſe nefarious practices, it has been neceſſary to ſeek refuge under the protection of the law—and againſt whom ſcarcely a day paſſes that there is not a ſerious charge of this nature brought, in the daily papers? Can you believe the world to be ſo wicked and cruelly unjuſt, as to brand with charges of this nature, men who by poſſibility can be innocent? Withhold then your pen from the attempt to defend characters ſo notoriouſly indefenſible; contaminate not your pages with an attempt, which muſt end in your and their diſgrace, and which will weaken the force of your arguments in favor of thoſe you have already brought forward, and for whom, by poſſibility, ſomething may be ſaid."

I am

I am not inſenſible to the arduous taſk I have undertaken throughout, and peculiarly in this inſtance. I am very ſenſible of the more than common prejudice entertained againſt this claſs of the trade. I know how laviſh has been the abuſe, and how violent the reproaches againſt them—but though this may increaſe my difficulty, it does not leſſen my ardor—I never promiſed to flatter the paſſions of thoſe whom I am addreſſing, but to ſpeak the language of truth and candour. I ſhall do ſo now—I ſhall not withdraw the mite of my aſſiſtance,becauſe theſe people ſtand moſt in need of it. If a greater degree of prejudice has encountered them, a leſs degree of juſtice probably has been done them. We are not to give credit to all we hear—even of abuſe. At leaſt we ought not to aſſume as proofs of general guilt, the alledged (or even proved) offence of an individual; or to ſuppoſe that a body of men, may not be highly uſeful, and even neceſſary to the ſtate, one member of which (or for argument's ſake allow many) has rendered himſelf by his conduct obnoxious to public juſtice, and deſerving of public opprobrium.

Amongſt all the claſſes of perſons concerned in the general and neceſſary article of corn, who contribute in any degree to its progreſs from the moment of its growth, to the period of conſumption, there is none (I ſpeak with confidence and challenge contradiction) to whom the publick intereſt is more indebted, or who form a more uſeful and highly

highly valuable part, than theſe men againſt whom the charges are moſt abundant, and the abuſe moſt groſs.

Perhaps to them we owe throughout the kingdom, what in the metropolis we owe to the importer, that regular ſupply of corn, and that uſeful huſbandry of the article, which in times of ſcarcity is the only remedy againſt actual want—which, whilſt it may have contributed to a conſiderable riſe of the article, has benefited the country much more by the ſalutary alarm, and timely retrenchment it has produced, than it has injured it by any advantage theſe men can have obtained from an advance in the price.

The conduct of the middle man, in periods of approaching ſcarcity, may be reſembled to that of an attentive and ſkilful phyſician. Like him, his obſervations made from time to time, have enabled him, to diſcover the diſorder, and to ſuggeſt the only remedies which the caſe admits of; he finds the diſorder beyond immediate cure, and the diſeaſe too deeply rooted to admit of inſtant extirpation. Inſtead of adminiſtering the violent dredge of an empiric, which might give inſtant relief, but which in its conſequences, would gradually undermine the conſtitution of his patient, and be inevitably followed by premature (however protracted) diſſolution, he preſcribes with the ſkilful hand of profeſſional knowledge thoſe palliating and emollient remedies, ſuited to the weak frame of his patient,

patient, and which by their mild and gradual operations may in time reſtore him to his wonted vigour and ſtrength.—It is true he will expect for this an handſome fee—he will demand a liberal and perhaps a profuſe recompenſe—far beyond the accuſtomed claims of his profeſſion; but is he not entitled to it—has he not earned it? Remember there is great reaſon to belive he has ſaved your life, that he has added conſiderably to your days, and to the happy enjoyment of them, by reſtoring your frame, in danger of ſuffering by your imprudence, to that accuſtomed health for which too high a price can ſcarcely be paid.

Such, and ſo ſkilful and prudent, has been the conduct of this man, againſt whom you all with one accord lift up your hands. The information which the middle man has obtained of the country, with regard to its produce, the wiſdom and experience which he has brought to the only ſubject that engages his attention, enables him to ſpeak his ſentiments to the public (more ſtrongly than by a thouſand orations) in the price, at which he diſpoſes of to you the produce of the farmer's land. He ſoon aſcertains the extent and depth of that wound, which Providence has been pleaſed to inflict on the nation. He tells you there is no immediate remedy for the ſcarcity, though on your conduct it depends, as to its being followed by actual want—that it behoves you to manage with frugality that which you can procure, as the only means to

avoid

avoid a future greater ſcarcity and an increaſed price. This was the language he uſed to you in the beginning of the laſt winter, and (fortunately for the country) its reaſoning and good ſenſe was acted upon by the nation at large; if it had not, I am well convinced, that the months of July and Auguſt would have found us without bread to eat.

Nor let the public deceive themſelves, by imagining, that the middle man adds in any conſiderable (or even in an unneceſſary) degree to the price, by ſtepping in between them and the grower. Though our maxims of commerce will in theſe days receive little credit from their conformity to the opinions of even the great Lord Coke, (who if he had lived in theſe times, would, I think, have differed on this ſubject from ſome of his brethren,) yet I am very willing to adopt his ſentiments on the riſe of the article, in conſequence of the hands through which it paſſes to the conſumer, provided he will allow me, to inſert the word *unneceſſary*. If he means to ſay, that an article becomes dearer, when it paſſes through thoſe hands, which are *neceſſary* to convey it with moſt promptneſs, and advantage to the public, I am completely at iſſue with him—I believe no ſuch thing. I am aſſured the fact is otherwiſe—that the price is rather leſs, than greater to the public. Do people imagine, that if the farmer was himſelf the corn dealer alſo, and ſold his ſingle quarter of oats, or his buſhel

or peck of other grain to the conſumer, the article would be cheaper than it is? That if he was to add tradeſman to his character, the public would either be as well or as cheaply ſerved as at preſent? Do you think he could afford to give you his time, and to be out of his capital, for nothing? Are you not aware, that uniting theſe two diſtinct branches, would interfere with that hourly perſonal attention neceſſary to the ſucceſsful conduct of his farm?

He would in fact, by being both, be neither. The open manly ſpirit of the Engliſh yeoman, would degenerate into the low cunning of the petty chandler, and the effect would inevitably be, that ſo far from the public being ſerved cheaper, they would not only have to pay for the time and capital of the farmer, ſo employed, but for the certain loſs which he would ſuſtain either from ignorance of the buſineſs, or from the blending two concerns, diſtinct in their nature, and in the qualities requiſite for conducting them to any ſucceſsful end.

I would beg to remark, that in the article of wheat, the public ſeem under a miſapprehenſion (as indeed they have been throughout) as to the buſineſs of the jobber with it. I have before obſerved that the wheat for the conſumption of the metropolis and its vicinity goes immediately from the miller to the baker, where the diſtance is not conſiderable from the mill to town; but that in thoſe caſes where the aſſiſtance of a third perſon on the ſpot (as where it comes from the country mills) is

is neceſſary, the flour factor is the middle man. The jobber has nothing to do with it—he never deals in Engliſh wheat, and very rarely in foreign, except in conſequence of orders from his correſpondents along the coaſt, and which have almoſt been peculiar to the preſent ſpring and ſummer, when inſtead of the London market being ſupplied as formerly from the coaſt, the latter has been ſupplied by them, and not unfrequently ſo as to conſiderably affect the price here.

It is exactly the ſame in country markets. The jobbers, whether from the large ſums neceſſary and which they cannot ſpare from their other buſineſs, or from the millers requiring not their aſſiſtance, do not ſpeculate in wheat. The jobber may poſſibly deviate from this rule in the caſe of a great inequality in price (either from the cauſes which I have before allowed to be poſſible, or from adventitious circumſtances) in markets not far diſtant from each other, by flying to the relief of the ſuffering one; and whatever may be his profit, if he relieves the ſcarcity (and of courſe the price) he is rendering the moſt uſeful ſervice to the country, and whatever be his motives, entitled to the thanks of every man in the neighbourhood.

If it had not been that one of this claſs has been brought forward as a ſtate delinquent, and treated with more than common ſeverity and harſhneſs, I ſhould cloſe my account of the jobber, with only a few obſervations on the nature of his buſineſs—

But the intereſt I feel in (what appears to me) the unmerited obloquy, to which this individual, and with him the whole claſs, has been conſigned, impoſe on me the duty, not only to explain (which I ſhall do very briefly) the nature of this man's traffick, but to make ſome remarks on that trial which has been the ground of a treatment ſo cruel.

The buſineſs of the Jobber on the great ſcale it admits of in the metropolis, is to purchaſe the cargoes of oats, barley, beans, &c. &c. imported at this time in quantities ſo conſiderable. To the Jobbers are theſe cargoes ſold by the Factors, and by them dealt out to the public, or in ſome caſes exported again to the coaſt. The Jobber is the middle man between the merchant and conſumer; he enables the former, by immediately purchaſing the whole of his article, to re-employ his capital inſtantly. He enables him to return immediately to market with his money, and to ſupply the public with a new cargo. By theſe quick returns of his capital, and the ſhort detention of his veſſel, the merchant can afford his goods at a price infinitely leſs than in any other caſe he would be able. On the part of the public, the Jobber ſupplies each individual according to his wants and demands; and for which though he pays ſomewhat more than the Jobber pays the merchant, he certainly pays leſs (excluſive of avoiding much inconvenience) than if he bought the quantity he

ſtands

ſtands in need of from the merchant himſelf. Suppoſe the factor had no middle man to whom he could diſpoſe of his employer's cargo, but was obliged to ſell it piece-meal to the conſumer, in the quantity ſuitable to his wants, either in the veſſel, or in the warehouſe, if he choſe to land it. If in the former, the difficulty of acceſs will raiſe the price to the conſumer; and the length of time, the hands he muſt keep in pay, and the uncertainty when the veſſel will be unloaded, with the loſs of intereſt on his capital, will wonderfully enhance the price to the merchant; all which, together with an extra charge incurred by the riſk he runs of not diſpoſing of his goods, before the price that he could originally afford them at ſuffered a depreſſion, will alſo neceſſarily fall on the conſumer. In the latter caſe, to many of theſe charges, the merchant adds as a ſtrong ſett off againſt the advantage he obtained from diſmiſſing his veſſel (and which is not of the benefit it would have been, had he at the ſame time parted with his cargo) the expences of lighterage, porterage, warehouſe-room, &c. &c.—loſs by remeaſuring—expence of people to attend the ſale, and laſtly, the impoſitions he would be liable to, from thoſe whom he muſt employ in this petty traffick. Whatever may be his expences in either caſe, muſt and will eventually be paid by the conſumer. A thinking mind, revolving this ſubject for a few minutes, aſſiſting his judgment by even the moſt favourable calculation of the expence,

which

which this mode of tranſacting the buſineſs would occaſion to the merchant, will ſoon be ſatisfied that the public has the article, not only in the manner and quantity, beſt ſuited to its wants, wiſhes and convenience, but alſo on terms the moſt reaſonable.

The hackney coach-maſter, the livery ſtable-keeper, the corn chandler, the gentleman and the tradeſman, can alike, by means of the jobber, procure the amount of their reſpective and limited wants with facility. The extra-price they pay for this accommodation is in reality a gain. It can readily be conceived, that if they had to convey it from the veſſel or the warehouſe themſelves, even at the price that the jobber pays for it, they would be no gainer ; and it would be idle to ſuppoſe that under the diſadvantages already ſtated the merchant could ſo afford it. In truth, half of the perſons who conſume the articles, could not fetch the article, if they were ſo inclined.

If the jobber too, in time of ſcanty importation and ſhort ſupply, finds that the markets in the vicinity of town are ſtocked beyond their wants, and of conſequence low in price, he goes thither, and brings to town that exceſs, which when taken, is not miſſed there, but renders incalculable ſervice here. If on the contrary, they have a ſhort and dear market in the country, he carries thither the neceſſary ſupply, from London. Nor is the jobber in the country leſs uſeful. His buſineſs is to

purchaſe

purchaſe at the beſt market of the farmer (or if in the neighbourhood of London of the factor) that produce in the groſs, which he deals out again in ſmall quantities to the inn keeper, corn chandler, farmer, or gentleman, who are not able perhaps to procure a ſupply of their limited wants from the farmer, without ſubjecting him to inconvenience, and themſelves to extra charge. The jobber equalizes by his alternate ſupply of each, thoſe variations of prices, which, in the vaſt concern of corn, muſt inevitably ariſe in markets even near to each other. He is frequently enabled to render the moſt eſſential ſervice to the country, when its markets are ill ſupplied, either from actual ſcarcity, or from a partial and temporary withholding of the article. In theſe times he pours in a ſupply, and by this means draws the commodity forward, if there is any, or ſupplies the wants of the neighbourhood, if it is really exhauſted of the article. He is indeed frequently able (yet with no inconſiderable profit to himſelf) to ſupply the market, (though he has the expence of diſtant carriage) on terms lower, than it can be afforded on the ſpot. He frequently does ſo, and the public, all but the grower, reap the benefit. The aſſiſtance too which the great corn dealer in town gives to the merchant; in the country is given to the farmer; he buys of him thoſe different articles in the groſs, which the miller wants not, and deals them out in leſſer parcels according to the wants of the neighbourhood.

bourhood. On the other hand, thoſe articles of ſeed corn, which the farmer wants, the jobber furniſhes him with, to the great convenience of the former, which if he were to endeavour to obtain himſelf from the market where they were beſt to be procured, would rob him of time he could ill ſpare from his home, as well as add, inſtead of leſſen, the price he muſt pay for them.—By this ſubdiviſion of labour, and of capital, two perſons obtain a comfortable livelihood, where one who united both branches would be in danger of ſtarving.

Be aſſured that this is the caſe; that the jobber or middle-man, whether in town or country, is the moſt uſeful œconomical medium through which the wants of this vaſt country (taking every circumſtance into conſideration) can be ſupplied. The greater wonder is, that it is ſupplied ſo well, and on terms ſo reaſonable, as to the gain of thoſe through whoſe hands the articles paſs.

The ſubject too of their profits, deſerves ſome little conſideration.—Doubt not that every thing of this kind is always exaggerated.—When men are held up to the publick indignation, the cenſure of the world is never limited to that which is founded in truth. To effect our ends, it is not ſufficient to paint them dark, they muſt be jet black. When therefore, in the true ſpirit of cenſure, we repreſent the conduct of thoſe we mean to injure in the eyes of the publick, we ſometimes forget, how poſſible it is, that we may counteract our own views, by the exceſs of thoſe imputations we

have

have laviſhed on the objects of our prejudice, and which from their nature cannot be true. How truly in point is the charge of immenſe profits brought againſt the jobbers by their enemies, and borrowed from what paſſed on the examination of an evidence (or which was ſuppoſed to paſs in *his mind)* at a trial which I ſhall ſhortly notice. If we are to believe theſe charges, his profits are almoſt beyond calculation — 50 per cent. per ann. will not content him—he muſt have 100, 200, and in ſome caſes even 500 per cent.

It is in this as in every thing elſe, where an object is to be anſwered.—The publick have been taught that every man who ſtands between them and the grower of corn, contributes to the price of the quartern loaf, and that this man does ſo more than any other—he is therefore to be cruſhed—and to do it one muſt not be over-nice in the means—he has once in his life perhaps made at the rate of 1000, or 2000 per cent. per ann. on an article. This caſual advantage is inſtantly rendered the permanent, or not unuſual profit of his trade, whilſt the loſſes which have not unfrequently been at the ſame rate, are ſunk in the account. Torrents of abuſe are to be poured upon him for the unconſcionableneſs of his gains, but no notice is to be taken, not even one word of commiſeration to be heard for his loſſes, however ſevere.

But what is the idea we have of the word profit? Do the publick think that it is the difference of

price which the ſeller receives, from that which he pays, for the article? Whoever takes this definition as a correct one, wanders very far from the truth. For inſtance, a jobber buys at Mark lane this Monday 50 quarters of oats at 40*s*. per quarter—he ſells them on that day fortnight at two guineas. According to this idea of the word profit, he gains at the rate of 130 per cent. per ann. by this bargain. No ſuch thing—he more likely makes nothing by it. When he bought it, it was part of a cargo, on board a ſhip or a lighterman's craft—he has ſince landed and warehouſed it. When he comes to reckon up his lighterage, porterage, warehouſe rent, loſs by remeaſuring, intereſt of his money, &c. &c. if he has cleared 3*d*. per quarter, he muſt conſider himſelf a fortunate man—and yet the publick, when they find him make at the rate of 5 per cent. in a fortnight, inſtantly cry out upon the unconſcionable rogue, and blazon his profits through every ſtreet of the town, without waiting to examine, with what expences this profit has been burdened, and in what proportion it has been by this means diminiſhed.

Very different however, is their conduct, when he has ſuſtained a loſs; you hear no publication of this. When oats fell from 56*s*. to 30*s*. in one fortnight (or little more) when thoſe who were obliged for want of money, to part with this article, loſt *more than half the capital embarked in it*, we heard not a word of it. No—this would not have anſwered

ſwered the purpoſe; which was to excite the publick reſentment againſt this claſs, by repreſenting them as always gainers, but never loſers.

Yet if the truth is to be ſpoken, it will be found in a very different ſtatement of the ſubject. Liable, occaſionally to conſiderable gains, and equally ſo at times to heavy loſſes, they conduct their buſineſs at an hazard equal to any other branch of the trade- the whole of the concern in corn is a moſt hazardous one—the game is played at very high ſtakes, and thoſe who play at it, muſt occaſionally meet with ſome profits, which in the regular courſe of trade, where little hazard is run, may ſeem at firſt ſight immenſe. If the jobber did not, it would be impoſſible for him to go on—his buſineſs would not ſupport him.

His intereſt however leads him never to riſk the keeping his property by him long, eſpecially in times of probable fluctuation in price—his general maxim to which he invariably adheres when poſſible, is, quick returns and ſmall profits.—In proportion to the length of time in which he has been out of his money he expects a proportionate recompenſe.—If you do not oblige him to land the property he has bought, but will work it out of the ſhip at no expence to him, he will be content with a trifling advantage—if on the contrary he muſt be at the expence of landing it, &c. &c. he looks for an advance in price; but do not believe that in this caſe he is not frequently miſtaken. From ſpecu-

lations which promiſed advantage at the outſet, he is often obliged to cloſe his account on terms which have ſnatched from him the advantage of many former bargains, and there is only left to him the hope of better ſucceſs in future.

Such often is the lot of this man, whom you brand with every epithet of reproach, and condemn to public infamy. You have heard that one of this claſs has been convicted by a jury of his country of the crime of regrating, and though you do not know all the circumſtances, yet you feel ſatisfied his crime muſt have been of the blackeſt dye, becauſe the jury were told on that occaſion, that a verdict of condemnation "would carry glad tidings to the people, and particularly to the poor." Of conſequence, he muſt be conſidered as one amongſt the number of thoſe who are repreſented as preying on the vitals of the people, and by their avarice contributing to the publick miſery. You conſider him no longer in the real character he deſerves—that of the middle-man, who ſtands between you and the grower for the mutual advantage of both. You ſee in him only your bittereſt enemy, officiouſly interpoſing his offices, where you neither wiſh them, nor think you can receive ought but deadly injury from them.

What then are the circumſtances of this dreadful crime which has ſo increaſed your wonted prejudice againſt this claſs? What can an individual have done, ſo as to attach ignominy to *all* thoſe perſons

perſons who purſue the ſame branch of trade with himſelf. If a man has been convicted of the monſtrous crime of regrating, let us examine, whether he has been convicted of that, which at the time he did it, he thought wrong—whether he carried to the act, the mind and intention neceſſary to conſtitute *crime*—whether he has not been indirectly encouraged by the higheſt authority in the country, to do what he has done—whether, in legal ſtrictneſs, he did the act at all; and laſtly, whether he has done any thing, which every other man with the ſame opportunities, not in his buſineſs only, but in any of the various branches of trade, to be met with in the kingdom, does not do every day of his life, without the ſmalleſt ſuſpicion that he is doing that, which either the laws of his country, or of morality, forbid.

I muſt premiſe, that the report of the Trial which I have read, is that printed by Ridgway, and ſtated to have been taken in ſhort hand by a Barriſter.

This perſon, Mr. John Ruſby, was indicted for regrating, or re-ſelling in the ſame market, and on the ſame day, 30 quarters of oats, part of a lot of 90 quarters purchaſed by him in the morning, and by which re-ſale he obtained a profit of 2*s.* per quarter.—Every man acquainted with the buſineſs of the Corn Exchange, or who has taken the trouble to inform himſelf on this head, will find, that it has been the conſtant and univerſal

practice,

practice, to re-ſell any part of a commodity bought, where there was either an advantage on ſuch re-ſale—where the quantity originally bought was larger than either party wanted, and of courſe a mutual accommodation—or where the lot, after it was bought, was repented of by the purchaſer either from the price, or quality.—Whatever might be his reaſons for the re-ſale, no one objected to a practice which had exiſted beyond the memory of the oldeſt man at the Corn Exchange—which was a general convenience to the trade—which facilitated inſtead of interrupting the commerce—and from which the public could ſuſtain no poſſible injury equal in amount to what the reſtriction on the free agency of the jobber would inevitably occaſion.—This was done openly, even when it was known, that there were ſtatutes which prohibited it.—They were generally conſidered, though in force, as not likely to be acted on, and that which was known to be illegal, was ſcarcely practiſed with ſecrecy, or covertly.—But when the more enlightened ſpirit of Commerce began to dawn upon the nation, it was conſidered poſſible, that theſe reſtraints, though diſregarded by the bold, might have the effect of reſtraining the timid (but not leſs uſeful) members of the trade, in the free exerciſe of their induſtry and capital.—Men of intelligence, and thoſe beſt acquainted with the true principles of commerce (at that time a ſcience in the mere ſtate of childhood) exerted their influence

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with the legiſlature, to procure the abolition of thoſe laws, which they conſidered (and juſtly) as tending, if put in force, to the utter deſtruction of that commerce, and of thoſe very intereſts they were meant to uphold and protect.—This meaſure, the reſult of ſound reaſoning, was greatly aided in its progreſs, by the tranſcendent talents and comprehenſive mind of a gentleman * who though ſince dead, has raiſed for himſelf a monument "æ re perennius" in the grateful affection of the nation, by the important ſervices which he rendered not only to his country, but to the whole of civilized Europe, in the political writings which employed the few laſt years of a life, uſefully throughout, engaged in the public ſervice. This gentleman conſidered the freedom of trade as the foundation of national proſperity, and thoſe reſtrictions and prohibitions, which prejudice and vain fear had engendered in the early periods of its growth, as fungous excreſcences exhauſting its vital powers, and effectually and moſt banefully checking its progreſs to maturity.—The nation felt the ſentiment to be juſt, and inſtantly repealed the whole of thoſe acts which had remained on the Statute Book, a monument of the poverty of its principles (though nearly as a dead letter) from the time of Edward VI.—The gradual increaſe of the proſperity of commerce ſince the year 1772, the period in which this repeal took place, is the beſt

* Mr. Edmund Burke.

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panegyric on the wiſdom of the meaſure. The preamble of the Bill is particularly worthy of attention at this time, when the propriety of reſtoring them to the ſtatute book, has been ſuggeſted from high authority (I think not in the moment of reflection), becauſe it ſhews the ſpirit with which it adopted thoſe ſound and concluſive principles (and almoſt the very language) of that great and luminous character Dr. Adam Smith, which were afterwards ſubmitted to the world in the able and comprehenſive work of that writer. It ſtated that, " Whereas it hath been found *by experience*; that the reſtraints laid by ſeveral ſtatutes upon the dealing in *Corn*, *Meal*, *Flour*, Cattle, and other ſundry ſort of victuals, by *preventing a free trade* in the ſaid commodities, have a tendency to diſcourage the growth *and enhance the price* of the ſame—which ſtatutes if put in execution *would bring great diſtreſs* on the inhabitants of many parts of the kingdom, and *particularly on the cities of London and Weſtminſter*, be it therefore enacted, &c. &c.

Now is it poſſible to conceive a more complete acknowledgement of error—a more candid and manly confeſſion of the imprudent conduct it had hitherto purſued in preventing the benefit of a free trade, and of the effect which had been in conſequence produced, in the great diſtreſs which the people had ſuffered throughout the kingdom; but eſpecially in thoſe parts, where the freedom of

trade

trade is eſſentially neceſſary, to the daily regular ſupply of its inhabitants?

Are theſe principles then unwiſe and imprudent to be acted upon in the year 1800, which were deemed not only ſalutary, but neceſſary in the year 1772? Does the freedom of trade require leſs protection or encouragement, when the ſupport of ten millions of inhabitants look to it for the ſupply of their wants and wiſhes, than when ſix or ſeven millions only depended on its aid?—Are its principles to be diſputed at this day, when we have witneſſed the ſalutary effects of their operations, in the almoſt unlimited expanſion of that commerce to nearly its acmé of perfection ſince that period? Look to the imports and exports of that year, reflect on the ſtate of the internal trade in 1772, and then ſay whether the moſt ſanguine could have ventured to form an expectation ſo vaſt as that which has been realized in that period. To what is it to be attributed, if not to the enterpriſing ſpirit and active induſtry of the merchants, foſtered by the encouraging hand of legiſlative protection, and by the abolition of thoſe ſtatutes, which had hitherto reſtrained men from the open employment of their capital and induſtry in that manner, which, whilſt it accords with their views and inclinations, is beſt calculated to promote the real intereſt of commerce, and to carry it to its utmoſt ſtate of proſperity?

From this moment the trade did that openly and

extenſively, which before they had done covertly and partially. It was not peculiar to an individual or an houſe, it was the univerſal practice of the trade. Is it poſſible to believe that theſe men imagined they were doing wrong, when the legiſlature had openly acknowledged the impolicy and miſchief of the reſtraint it had formerly impoſed upon them? Could the man who, having bought a parcel of corn, more than his occaſion required (or tempted by price if you will) diſpoſed on the inſtant of part of it, not ſecretly, but in an open market, in the face of the world, think that he was offending againſt the laws of his country, when it was written on the higheſt record of the nation, that his former prohibitions had been found by *experience* an offence againſt public intereſt, and ſuch as the nation would no longer encourage, or endure?—Are theſe dealers then to be told, in anſwer to this cogent and powerful reaſoning—" It is true, the legiſlature has repealed the ſtatutes againſt foreſtalling, engroſſing and regrating (except a little reſervation in a parentheſis) but notwithſtanding this, if you adopt its ſentiments, and act upon the principles which it acknowledges to have cauſed the abolition of thoſe ſtatutes, the common law will ſtep forwards to puniſh you."

Of what advantage then, was it to aboliſh this act? What benefit could the country derive from this half meaſure, uſhered in with ſo much ſolemnity

lemnity by open undiſguiſed avowal of error and contrition. I know it will be ſaid, that the legiſlature could not aboliſh with the ſtatutes, the proviſions of the common law—but were there no means it could have taken to protect thoſe who might ſuffer from its perſecutions? If it did not, what a mockery of bounty did it preſent, what a ſolemn but contemptible farce was it acting before the public. Of what uſe was this vaunted privilege, granted in the fulneſs of its generoſity, and which was to protect the trade from *all* "further proſecutions, informations, indictments, or ſuits for the *inflicting of any puniſhment*, or recovery of any fine, penalty, &c. any *law*, ſtatute or *uſage* to the contrary notwithſtanding," except to entrap him into guilt, and to trick him into puniſhment. In vain can you ſay, that the repeal of the ſtatutes only was meant to take away the penalty—it ſays more, it ſpeaks much ſtronger language; yet if the common law was to have its operations, it would not even protect him ſo far; for though the exact penalty there inflicted could not be recovered, no one will venture to ſay, that on a verdict of guilty under an indictment at the common law, the ſentence may not be fine and impriſonment. So that you have merely changed the word, and he is ſtill ſubjected as before to the ſame actual puniſhment.

I declare to God, that ſince I have read this trial—ſince I have obſerved the favoured ſpirit

of perſecution ſtalking abroad, ſcattering about its venom on the heads of guiltleſs individuals, and poiſoning in its fatal progreſs the very ſources, from which ſpring all the energies of trade, I have more trembled for my country—I have had greater apprehenſions for its ſafety, than during all that period of political convulſion, when in common with the reſt of Europe it was attacked by the abſurd but ſpecious philoſophy of the Rights of Man, with all the farrago of nonſenſe imported at that time into the country, in the "Gipſy Jargon" of the late French School—I have felt my mind more agitated, more worked up into a reſentment, which (however warm my mind and temper naturally may be) is not I truſt its uſual character; when I have reflected on this monſtrous and cruel uſage of men, who whilſt they are contributing to the wealth and proſperity of their country, are ſubjected to perſecutions, the prominent feature of arbitrary government, and forming the ſtrong contraſt to thoſe mild, and juſt principles on which the liberties of Engliſhmen are founded. Let any man have aſked Mr. Ruſby previous to his trial (God knows the poor man has heard and felt enough of it ſince) what the common law meant—would he, or nineteen out of twenty of his trade have been able to tell you? Or would he have given you credit, if you had told him, or indeed could he have believed it poſſible, when the legiſlature ſays to him, "Go on,

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according to your will and pleaſure—henceforth exerciſe unconſtrained liberty in your dealings for the benefit of the public, which has been injured by the former reſtraints, that in its folly and ignorance of its true intereſts it impoſed upon you," that ſome incomprehenſible, unknown, undefined, but ſuperior power is lurking in ſecret to watch his motions, and to puniſh with the extremeſt rigour thoſe acts which have the open ſanction of legiſlative approbation, and which have been proclaimed aloud, by the omnipotent voice of Parliament, to be the only genuine and true ſources of national proſperity and commercial greatneſs.

Taking this ſubject in all its bearings on the character, conſiſtency and juſtice of the country, and the important conſequences connected with it—the ample diſcuſſion of it would take a pamphlet of itſelf—I refrain therefore from further diſcuſſion of it, and haſten to the caſe of Ruſby, as the only inſtance we have lately known of the exerciſe of this right of the common law, as to the corn trade.

After what I have ſaid, there is no ground for affixing a criminal imputation on the defendant—according to the maxim " Actus non facit reum, niſi mens ſit rea," however he may ſuffer the puniſhment of a criminal, he was guilty of no crime in a moral ſenſe. Indeed this was not attempted to be maintained—but let us ſee whether he was guilty of the *Act*, laying the criminal intention

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out of the matter. What is the charge? that of regrating—he muſt to do this, both buy and ſell—one act is not ſufficient—but he did not—nor could he be perſuaded ſo to do—the act of ſelling was the act of another perſon, who, though a partner, acted not only without the conſent, but in direct oppoſition to the will of the defendant—how then was he guilty of the act *as laid in the indictment?* He was certainly not.

But I am well aware that in ſupporting this aſſertion, I muſt neceſſarily have to combat the law which was laid down on that occaſion, as to the liability of one partner for the act of another. It may be preſumption to diſpute the ſoundneſs of the law, when I conſider by whom it is laid down; but I do reſiſt it. I can never bring my mind to admit, that the partnerſhip account extends to guilt—What (as was properly put by the defendant's counſel) if one partner forges a bill, are the reſt liable? If one partner obtains money under falſe pretences in a ſwindling tranſaction, are the others involved in the guilt or puniſhment? Even in the caſe of a civil injury, as a treſpaſs by one partner, are the reſt anſwerable? I will concede that generally ſpeaking, any act done by one partner for the mutual benefit of the partnerſhip, involves them all in its conſequences, but then it muſt not be a criminal act; I will even allow that a miſdemeanor of the nature of that in queſtion *might* have ſubjected the whole partnerſhip to puniſh-

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ment, though the act was only committed by *one*; but then, they must have been all privy, or consenting to the transaction—or at least not dissenting.

I must not be told "that if the transaction was a common one, not to be distinguished from many others which preceded it, that was sufficient to imply consent." So I acknowledge it might, if there was no actual dissent. As well may you say, that if two housebreakers set out according to their usual custom, with a view of breaking open an house, each carrying part of the instruments necessary for the purpose—they commence together their operations, but before the actual burglary is committed, even when it had been in part accomplished by both, a quarrel arises as to further proceedings—one man obstinate to go no farther, the other to go on—it ends in separation; one retires to a distance beyond the possibility of assistance, first expressing his dissent to and disclaiming all further concern in the transaction. On the return of his comrade, he refuses too to take any part of the spoils, obtained by an act done against his consent—will you say that both are guilty of the burglary? and yet all the difference between this and former transactions, was, that setting out with the same intentions one man alters his mind, and refuses his consent to the completion of the project (no matter for what reason.) Exactly similar is this case; the men commence their operations with

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the ſame intent, that of the uniform courſe of their trade, but in the progreſs to that act which conſtitutes the criminal part, they quarrel, and one man enters his proteſt againſt and wipes his hands of any further proceedings.—Is he then guilty of a crime, he had no ſhare in, but in that of reſiſting it with all his power? Surely not.

A caſe was ſaid to have been cited by the noble judge, from Lord Raymond's reports, to confirm the doctrine of the liability of one partner for the act of another, by analogy to that of a maſter for the act of his ſervant. I have looked with care over thoſe reports, but I find no ſuch caſe. I find nothing about a builder and his ſervant—a parcel of rubbiſh—a coach and no light—and the cataſtrophe of the over-turn, all ſo gravely and minutely put by the ſhort-hand writer into the mouth of the judge. I can find, it is true, the caſe of Turbervile and Stampe, which was an *action upon the caſe grounded upon cuſtom*, againſt the maſter, for the negligent act of the ſervant in burning a field of the plaintiff's heath—in this civil action the Lord Chief Juſtice Holt is made to ſay "If my ſervant throws dirt into the highway I am indictable"—the mere dictum of a judge, by way of illuſtrating an argument—it is no caſe. With all the reſpect I entertain for that great judge, I ſhould be ſorry to ſubſcribe to this dictum as *law*. I think had the actual caſe come before him, he would not have thought it a fit one to go to the jury, as involving

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the maſter in the *criminal* part of the tranſaction, if the maſter could prove that the act was done in his abſence and after a ſtrict charge, before he left his houſe, to the contrary. I do not ſay that the doctrine of "reſpondent ſuperior" is not a very ſalutary one, for the general intereſts of ſociety; and a criminal act of my ſervant, by which another ſuſtains a civil injury, *may* (it will not always) form the ground work of a civil action againſt me. Juſt ſo as to the caſe ſuppoſed. The owner of this coach, ſo overturned for want of light, in conſequence of my ſervant throwing the rubbiſh into the ſtreet, might have a civil action againſt me for the loſs he had ſuſtained by the negligence of my ſervant; or if he could prove that my ſervant did the act in queſtion, with a wilful intention to do him an injury, he might indict *him*—he could not indict me, or at leaſt if he did, the judge muſt tell the jury, that ſo far from my being guilty or acceſſary to the crime, it was not in my power to prevent it, but that I did all, which, under the circumſtances, I could do, to avoid it. What jury would find me guilty? I think none could be found to do ſo—I ſhould think myſelf very harſhly uſed if they did.

Now let us conſider what was proved in the caſe of Ruſby. Was he not proved to have completely and ſincerely reſiſted the act for which the indictment was laid: did he ever give his aſſent to, or take any part in it? did he receive

any ſubſequent advantage from it, either directly, or indirectly?—No, quite the contrary. How then is he guilty of a criminal act?—how then can he be made the ſubject of a criminal indictment, much leſs of conviction?

It appears indeed that he was convicted, by oppoſing inference to proof, by inferring from his conduct in former ſimilar caſes, the commiſſion of an offence in this, which he was *proved* not to have been guilty of, or to have had his uſual concern with. But the witneſſes who were brought in ſupport of his innocence are not credited by the judge, and their teſtimony goes with ſtrong impeachment to the jury.—Certainly if they were believed to be guilty of groſs and wilful perjury, no wonder at the verdict. It could have been no other; but let us examine whether theſe men deſerve this imputation on their character, whether their teſtimony has been ſuch, as to warrant us in believing that they have perjured themſelves.

I well know that, for obvious reaſons, the moſt candid and open teſtimony of partners, in favour of each other, goes to a jury, with ſome ſhade of ſuſpicion. But of itſelf it ought not to go with more than this, and if ſuch teſtimony is corroborated by other evidence, the ſuſpicion is removed; and there is no ground for entertaining it an inſtant.—Now let us ſhortly examine what paſſed on this occaſion.

Thomas Smith, one of the partners, ſwears that the reſale of the oats bought by Ruſby was his whole and ſole act—ſteadily and repeatly oppoſed by

by Ruſby, and the tranſaction as well as the benefit of it (though conſiderable) entirely diſclaimed by Ruſby—ſo completely ſo, that the original entry made as uſual on the partnerſhip account was exchanged in the Factors book, to that of Thomas Smith only.

William Smith, the other partner, confirms this evidence in every material circumſtance; he deſcribes the tranſaction, as Thomas Smith had done, the altercation that enſued, and the conſequent determination of Thomas Smith, to take them upon his own account; and he adds, that the threat of proſecution was long ſubſequent to this determination.

Now if the caſe ſtood thus, is there any doubt upon it? Is there not that conſiſtency which entitles it to credit, and which ought to counteract any ſuſpicion ariſing from partnerſhip alone—But we have the corroborating teſtimony to the truth of the material part of the tranſaction from another evidence—What does Mr. Nattraſs the Factor ſay?

He ſays, that he ſold the oats, for the houſe of Smith, Ruſby and Co. that he knows not who brought the ſample; that it was very likely it was Ruſby, but of this he has no recollection. For they had ſo many ſamples brought to their ſtand, that it was impoſſible for him to remember every ſample exactly; but he ſwears poſitively and without reſerve, that the original entry in his book to the account of Smith, Ruſby and Co. was altered (and this ap-

peared on production of the book) for that of Thomas Smith only, at his desire, and that this was done *long before he heard of this prosecution, and soon after the sale.*

Now with this corroboration of the evidence of the partners, what grounds were there for supposing, that the jury had not heard the truth?—Why, this last evidence could not speak positively *enough* to entitle him to credit, and the first witness (for by the bye, no one attempts to impeach the testimony of William Smith, and his evidence alone would have acquitted Rusby) has spoken *too* positively to be believed. There is too much certainty in one case and too little in the other—Let us see how this is made out.

In the case of Mr. Nattrass it is said "he has not spoken with more than *belief*; he has expressed a considerable doubt of the exact circumstances of a transaction (not distinguished from thousands of others which have since passed through his hands) which he must remember—Is it possible he should not have known who gave him the sample bag?"

Has either the noble lord who presided on the bench, or any of the counsel who conducted the prosecution, ever been on a market day at the Corn Exchange? if he has, and has witnessed the hurry, confusion and noise at that place, he will only wonder that the factors remember any thing, not that they forget at the end of *eight months*, the particulars of a common transaction, or even at a week's

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end, are not enabled to tell you, which of a partnerſhip actually delivered to them the bag in which the ſample was. You would put moſt factors to their wits end, to aſk them to relate to you at the end of the day all the minute particulars of every bargain which paſſed in the courſe of it, ſuch as who brought the ſample—what inſtructions (except in main particulars) were given at the time—how many perſons looked at the ſample—what they each ſaid on it, &c. &c. And yet this man's teſtimony is to be received with caution, becauſe at the end of this long ſpace of time, he cannot ſwear to a circumſtance as inſignificant and unimportant *at the time*, as any one of thoſe I have mentioned. What did it ſignify to Nattraſs and Preſt, who brought the corn to them?—they were to ſell it as Factors, for the houſe of Smith, Ruſby and Co.—they could have attached no importance to the circumſtance—they *might* have remembered it, but it was not *neceſſary* they ſhould—it was very improbable they could have *ſworn* to it.

But there are two circumſtances, which clear up the matter both as to the evidence of Nattraſs, and the innocence of Ruſby, beyond all doubt in my mind.—Mr. Nattraſs ſays, that he really could not ſwear who brought the ſample — and Mr. Thomas Smith tells you, that he delivered it to Mr. Preſt, not to Mr. Nattraſs—and that he does not know whether Mr. Nattraſs was even preſent when he delivered the ſample to Mr. Preſt.

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This certainly reconciles, becauſe it accounts for, the doubt, expreſſed by Mr. Nattraſs as to the party who delivered the ſample—the hand which delivered it, he did not (for he could not) recollect —It might have been Ruſby as well as any one elſe—but in fact it was not—he might however very naturally confuſe the period in which he ſaw the ſample firſt on his ſtand, with that of the original delivery by Smith to Preſt.—So much for the want of poſitiveneſs in the teſtimony of this witneſs.

I hardly think it neceſſary to obſerve on the advantage attempted to be taken from his having called an *extract* from his book a *copy*. It drew forth a ſevere admonition and reproof, and of courſe I ſuppoſe it deſerved one ; after this, one can ſay nothing upon it.—The miſnomer did not weigh a grain, as to the real merits, however much has been attempted to be made of it.

And now we have done with the too little poſitiveneſs of one witneſs ; let us conſider that of the other, which was thought too great.—He ſwears—to the total innocence of Ruſby—to the quarrel in conſequence of the tranſaction—and tho' his brother confirms the facts, yet it is too much for credit —the man has acted with exalted friendſhip, but to it he has ſacrificed the " laws of God and Man"—it requires an unaccountable degree of credulity to believe him, and in his wiſh to exculpate his friend " he has violated that regard to truth, which under

der the ſolemnity of an oath no friendſhip—no motives can excuſe."

I have given this ſubject much attention, and I cannot find a particle of imputation juſtly fixed on the teſtimony Smith has given—it is conſiſtent throughout.—Nor is much ſtreſs to be laid on the manner in which he gave his evidence.—He was (to his credit be it ſpoken) as much out of his element in a Court of Juſtice, as the counſel would have been out of theirs at the Corn Exchange.—Coming into Court, with the expreſs but honourable intent to ſpeak the truth—to exculpate an innocent man, even at the probable hazard of furniſhing materials for his own conviction, he would naturally feel ſomewhat more embarraſſed, than a well-taught evidence, or an old practitioner would be. Nor would that embarraſſment be leſſened, by the frequent admonitions addreſſed to him on one ſide—which he might conſtrue into threats, or from the repetition of queſtions on the other, which he knew not how to anſwer, without ſubjecting himſelf to future proſecution, alternately aſſured of protection, and alternately threatened with puniſhment—encouraged to circumſpection in his anſwers, yet branded with imputations, when he exerciſed the privilege—informed that his evidence would be taken down, and yet interrogated as to points which, if he had anſwered with truth, would (without any real guilt) have furniſhed his enemies with thoſe materials

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for an indictment which they were ſeeking for ſo anxiouſly, was it ſurprizing that he ſhould not have preſerved the eaſe and compoſure of an hardened, and well-tutored evidence? Or thus aſſailed, is it not more wonderful that he ſhould have preſerved throughout the perfect conſiſtency he did?

The reſpect which I entertain for Courts of Judicature induces me to abſtain from ſaying all that ariſes in my mind on this ſubject. The treatment which witneſſes ſometimes receive in Court (and indeed too frequently) is a ſubject of no little import to the intereſts of public juſtice. It is a ſubject however ſo very delicate, that if I had time, I ſhould not be inclined to diſcuſs it at this moment. Let me however be permitted to aſk the Counſel who conducted this proſecution, on what principle of candour, of juſtice, or even of common humanity, the following queſtion could be put to this witneſs, or the inference drawn from it which followed.

Counſel.—Have not *you yourſelf*, re-ſold in the market, on the ſame day you bought it, corn at profit of 5*s*. per quarter?

Witneſs.—I do not chuſe to anſwer that queſtion.

Counſel.—That will do as well for *my purpoſe* as if you had anſwered *yes*.

I mean no diſreſpect to the Counſel, but is this the fair and candid treatment a witneſs is entitled to?

to? You put a queſtion to him—if he anſwers in the affirmative, you have inſtant grounds for proſecution—if he claims the privilege of ſilence, which he is not only entitled to, but which you have exhorted him to do, it is inferred that if he had not been deterred by perſonal apprehenſions, he would have ſaid yes. What man ſo treated could have left the Court, under the circumſtances in which Smith ſtood, without an imputation on his character and conduct?

In vain may you talk of the impoſſibility of getting the truth from him by other means—that he is an unwilling witneſs, and a great deal more which is uſually advanced in juſtification;—this means nine times out of ten, that you have attempted to confuſe him, but that you have not ſucceeded; that you cannot get him to ſay what you wiſh (and which if he did, he would perjure himſelf) that he is the man on whoſe evidence the caſe turns, and that it cannot be eſtabliſhed, if his credibility is not impeached either directly, or by inference.

The Counſel who conducted this trial, ſeem, if they have not acted with the extreme of candor, yet to have managed it with much ſkill. I am quite ſatisfied, that this queſtion (which could by no means affect the then proſecution of Ruſby) with the ſtreſs afterwards laid upon it, occaſioned the conviction. The man was in fact found guilty, not for the offence alledged, which it was *proved*,

he did *not* commit, but for the many offences and enormous profits, which from the ſilence of his partner, he was *inferred* to have made in former inſtances.

I cannot refrain from juſt noticing this charge of immenſe profits, which naturally would be eſtabliſhed if the man had anſwered *Yes* to the queſtion. If he had anſwered in the affirmative, I dare ſay he would have ſpoken the truth. Why, you will ſay, this is at the rate of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for one day, or perhaps for one hour. Very true it is —and all the reply I ſhall make to the aſtoniſhment excited by an acknowledgment of this immenſe profit, *is, that this very houſe of Smith, Ruſby, and Co. have ſold within theſe laſt four months, a Cargo of Oats, on which they actually loſt* 20*s. per quarter*, four times the amount of this profit. One cannot add, by comment, to the force of this anſwer to all the nonſenſe on the head of profit, which that trial gave circulation to.

The reply of the Counſel for the proſecution, and the addreſs of the Judge, would form the ſubject of much obſervation and criticiſm—but as I have little inclination to further agitate my mind—or to run the riſk of violating that reſpect I really entertain for the actors in this part of the ſcene, I ſhall diſmiſs it, with briefly obſerving, that the opinions and language of the Counſel and the Judge, whether in reference to the law or policy of the immediate ſubject, or taking the wider

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range of general principles, meet my utter diſlike and unqualified oppoſition.

I cannot perceive in them that candor or good ſenſe, which I ſhould have expected in their application to the caſe, whilſt it is impoſſible I can ſhut my eyes to that great and manifeſt danger, which conſidered as general principles, muſt attend their promulgation, and which, if once univerſally, or even generally, recognized and acted upon, would totally demoliſh that valuable fabrick of Commercial Wealth and Proſperity, which has been erected, under the foſtering auſpices of a protecting and once diſcerning public, by the active and enterpriſing ſpirit of individuals.

I declare, that I know nothing of the man who was the object of this proſecution (I had nearly ſaid perſecution). I know a little perſonally of the witneſs Mr. Thomas Smith, but I have never ſpoken to him, ſince the trial which I have been diſcuſſing. I have, however, taken much pains ſince I read it, to learn the character, and uſual habits of trade of this houſe. The reſult of my enquiries has been much in their favor—they are repreſented to me as harmleſs, inoffenſive characters—though extenſive in their concerns, yet fair and moderate in their dealings. Though trading largely as Jobbers, yet rarely given to ſpeculation, and leſs frequent ſtill to *regrating*. In fine, as men wholly undeſerving the cruel treatment they have met with,

and conſidered by thoſe who know them as harſhly treated, and oppreſſed individuals.

The effect of this proſecution to Ruſby has been moſt ſerious. The papers have informed us of the demolition of his houſe, and of the deliberate plan laid for ſeizing his perſon. Can we doubt that this trial, and what paſſed on that occaſion, was the directing poſt, to guide the hand of public vengeance to a fit victim? Held up by a Court of Juſtice as a delinquent of the blackeſt hue, the exceſſes of the mob ſought and found a ſhelter under the ſanction of that which paſſed on that occaſion; and from the little I know of thoſe perſons, who were in any degree acceſſary to that verdict, I will not pay their feelings ſo ill a compliment, as to believe they would have entirely preſerved their ſerenity, if the demolition of this man's houſe had been followed by the murder of the owner—a cataſtrophe perhaps only avoided by his flight at the moment!

After all which I have ſaid on this extraordinary trial, as to the failure of proof againſt Ruſby—after the opinion that I am free to give, that the verdict was not only againſt the weight of evidence, but in the very teeth of it, and therefore, that he ought to be acquitted; yet I would not have my readers imagine, though he was ſtrictly and legally innocent of this particular tranſaction, that I mean to contend that there was any cauſe, better than *chance* to be aſſigned for it by his warmeſt

warmeſt friends.—He is not the hypocrite to pretend it. An unwillingneſs to diſoblige a particular factor, was the reaſon aſſigned, and the true one, why he would have no concern in a tranſaction, which at another time, he would very gladly have ſhared in—his unwillingneſs to do what appeared to him irregular, and the warmth which might be engendered in reſiſting the contrary opinion of Smith, induced him (perhaps in a fit of pique which he might afterwards repent, though too late) to throw the bargain upon his partner. He could claim no merit from his conduct, he only was not guilty of the act *laid in the indictment*, and that is all I contend for. Nevertheleſs, if he had joined in the tranſaction, he could have deſerved no imputation in an immoral view—he knew not that he was doing wrong—he did what every one in his own trade, and in every other, have done, and are doing hourly, and which in no degree is any hardſhip to the public. If a merchant buys an 100 hogſheads of ſugar, or of tobacco, will he not diſpoſe of it on the ſame day, if he can get a profit by it? The moſt conſcientious merchant on the Royal Exchange has done ſo. The price of courſe to the public, if they *muſt* have it in their turn, is ſomewhat raiſed, that is, if the man who bought it, has a juſt notion of the ſcarcity of the article. If he ſhould be miſtaken, the public will perhaps have it cheaper than he obtained it himſelf, and he will be a conſiderable loſer by

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the ſpeculation. If it turns out that he is right, it does not follow, that the great profit he obtains is an unreaſonable charge on the public, or that they pay more than they ought for it. Viewing it according to the ſcarcity, he bought it too cheap, and it has only found its level of price, which there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe it would not have done, if it had remained in the firſt merchant's hands, except we are to ſuppoſe him a fool.

The ſame reaſoning applies to the regrating of the jobber; for there can be no difference ariſing from the word market, whilſt he has done nothing immoral in the act of regrating—he has done no injury to the country by it—he has received no more than the worth of the article in a relative proportion to the demand. If after his purchaſe, the market had been loaded, and he had bought more than he wanted, with a view of ſelling part of it again, he muſt either have kept it at a probable diſadvantage, or have ſold it at a loſs inſtead of a gain; his ſpeculation in ſuch caſe, would have increaſed the cheapneſs, becauſe it increaſed the ſupply, and the public would have been benefited for it.

But I have now done with this man, and his hard caſe. Before, however, I quit the ſubject altogether, permit me moſt ſolemnly to diſavow the ſlighteſt intention in any language I may have uſed, or opinions which I have given on the ſubject of the above trial, or in any other part of this pamphlet,

phlet, to leſſen the reſpect which the country juſtly entertain for the great talents and virtue of the noble and learned Lord, who preſided on the above occaſion. Whatever may be my perſuaſion of the miſchief that many of his opinions have done to ſociety, however I may have felt the effects of them in my own perſon, I truſt I am above the littleneſs of feeling reſentment for injuries I have received from thoſe, who whilſt they were inflicting them, conſidered themſelves as conſcientiouſly diſcharging their duty. There is no man in the country who is more inclined than myſelf to do juſtice to the purity of thoſe motives, which have on all occaſions influenced the conduct of this noble Lord, in the high ſituation he fills. I believe a more honourable and virtuouſly-directed mind, never occupied that auguſt ſeat, nor one more intenſely anxious to promote all the great and valuable intereſts of ſociety. If I doubt the efficacy of the means employed, I am not the leſs inſenſible to the worth of the mind which has ſuggeſted them. Thinking as I do, that his great and active mind has taken a bent, and direction, very injurious to thoſe intereſts which he is ever moſt anxious to promote, whilſt I reſpect the motives which have influenced his conduct on this, as on every other occaſion, I cannot but deeply and feelingly lament, that the weight of his (deſervedly great) authority has been thrown into the ſcale, which already preponderates too heavily

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(at leaſt in my opinion) for the peace and welfare of the country.

The taſk I have undertaken is, I think, now finiſhed; I am not aware that I have omitted any branch of this extenſive trade, except it is that of the Corn-Chandler, whom I have not paſſed over from ſlight, but from the impoſſibility of his needing any defence, or having been the ſubject of accuſation. Abſurdity itſelf would be outraged by the charge of monopoly againſt this branch of the trade, the greateſt part of whoſe dealings meet the eye of every one who enters his ſhop, in the bins and ſacks, that crowd his limited ſpace; a truly uſeful medium through which the minuteſt demands and wants of the pooreſt individual, are to be ſatisfied, in the various articles of corn, ſeeds, &c. or the ſhop of the paſtry-cook ſupplied with the materials for his tarts and buns. By exerciſing a trade, in its amount ſo limited, they are as valuable members of ſociety, and as ſerviceable to the wants of the public (though they may be thankful, that they are not ſo obnoxious to its prejudices) as any other part of the trade. If they had ſtood in need of my defence, and had been accuſed with as little foundation, in truth, as the reſt, ſuch as it is, it would not have been withholden from them.

In the view I have taken of this intereſting ſubject, I have confined my obſervations to the neighbourhood of London, becauſe the defence of the

trade

trade reſiding near the capital, ſeems moſt called for, by the prejudice of the day; but the ſame principles and reaſoning apply—the ſame practice prevails—the ſame benefit reſults from the labours of every dealer throughout the kingdom. In conſidering them as a moſt valuable body of men, I have never pretended to ſay, that there may not be found ſome few individuals amongſt the immenſe numbers engaged in this traffic deſerving of public cenſure, and even of execration,—men who have taken advantage of an occaſional local ſcarcity, and preyed upon thoſe wants, and that affliction, which it was their duty to relieve. Such men ought to be held up to public deteſtation, and conſigned to perpetual infamy; they deſerve not the protection of any man, nor ſhall my pen be proſtituted in their ſupport. But this proves no more than we all know, of which very little obſervation will convince us, that in every trade there are unjuſt and wicked men, who ſacrifice every principle to their avarice, and make ſelf-intereſt their God. Brand not however, with indiſcriminate cenſure, a whole body for the miſconduct of a few individuals. Aſſure yourſelves, that theſe inſtances are neither frequent, nor important in their conſequences; they are made the moſt of by malice, and diſtorted into every ſhape, that anſwers beſt its purpoſe.

I know that I am uſing a language little agreeable to the taſte of many of my readers. I feel that nothing can be ſo unpopular as all the opi-

nions and doctrines I have ſubmitted to them on this ſubject; but they are not the leſs true—a little reflection will ſatisfy them that are ſo. Whatever therefore may be my ſucceſs, however popular clamour may be raiſed againſt me in my turn, I have done my duty, and in that I ſhall ſeek conſolation. I write to undeceive the people, not to obtain their applauſe. I ſhould feel a truer ſatisfaction, in having reſcued by my efforts, one innocent man, from public odium, and unmerited oppreſſion, than to be followed by the acclamations of thouſands, whoſe deluſions I had encouraged. I can flatter no man, nor any body of men.—I cannot ſay to the public, "I go with you in your prejudices and feelings on this ſubject." I know them to be fundamentally erroneous, and in their indulgence moſt dangerous, and I muſt tell them ſo. I am ſatisfied that theſe men whom they revile are their beſt friends, and that it is very much indeed their intereſt to keep them ſo—Senſible of this, I muſt try to ſtop their unmeaning, but dangerous clamour—I cannot join with them in their cry—no, not even to enjoy the enviable diſtinction—the exalted title of the *Man of the People*.

It may then be aſked "If theſe perſons whom we have always ſuſpected, and who have been ſtated to us (from what we have conſidered good authority) as the only real cauſes of the high price of bread, are not ſo—if they contribute not to its price,

price, how comes it that it is ſo dear—to what then is it owing?

Though the profeſſed and real object of this Pamphlet is to exculpate a Trade, from an unmerited charge, not to write a treatiſe on the cauſes of the dearneſs of proviſions, (and which has been ſo much more ably done by a gentleman,* to whom not only the agicultural world, but every man of curioſity and enquiry is much indebted for uſeful information, and actual reſearch) yet I will juſt touch upon ſome of the cauſes, which in my opinion occaſion the preſent high price of corn.

Its firſt, and important cauſe is *Scarcity*—not an artificial, but a real one, ariſing from no weak or wicked efforts of man to enrich himſelf at the expence of his fellow creatures, but from the viſitation of God. A brief examination of the produce of the harveſt of 1779, and of the uſual conſumption of the country, will ſatify my readers as to the juſtneſs of this concluſion.

And here permit me firſt to remark, as a matter of ſerious regret, that no means have yet been taken by the government of the country to obtain an account of the number of acres ſown with wheat (or it might be extended to other grain) in every pariſh throughout England and Wales—the average crop, and the mouths to conſume it

* Mr. Arthur Young.

which the pariſh contains. Such a return might be annually procured from the reſident miniſter.

The advantage which government would receive from this knowledge is incalculable, in the judgment it would at all times be enabled to exerciſe in its bounties, and in its occaſional interference with the trade. The public purſe would occaſionally be ſaved, and the public want always anticipated. The danger of exciting apprehenſion of being taxed by taking the number of the people, need not deter them—the preſent ſtate of taxation bids defiance to apprehenſion. The benefit which the country *might* receive from this meaſure is obvious. The thing is ſo highly uſeful, and yet ſo ſimple and feaſible, that one wonders it has not been long ſince done. It ought not to be delayed a moment longer.

In the preſent ſtate of our knowledge on this ſubject, we muſt a great deal truſt to conjecture, or to information, which cannot be entirely relied on, for any concluſion we may form. I have ſought in the writings, and in the experience of men, for the beſt data on which to rely.

Nothing is ſo uncertain as political arithmetic. The preſent numbers of the people, calculated by the returns of taxable houſes, with all the correction and checks that can be uſed, are for many reaſons liable to diſpute, and ſo indeed are moſt of the other ſources, from which any thing like certainty is preſumed. Amidſt all the vague opinions

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and calculations of the laſt ten years, we will ſteer a middling courſe, and without arraigning the grounds of theſe different calculations, (in lieu of which one could perhaps ſubſtitute no better) let us take the population of England and Wales, as it was ſtated ſome years ſince by Mr. Arthur Young, at 10,000,000. If it was too high at that time (which would be the general opinion), in all probability it is under the mark now. The ſame author calculates, that out of theſe, two millions live on barley or oaten bread. I have made ſome enquiry on this head; the reſult will not enable me to accede to the idea, that even at this time of ſcarcity, there are even half the numbers ſo fed. But I believe this would be nearer the truth. We will take them however at 1,500,000. According to this calculation, there will be 8,500,000 perſons, who eat wheaten bread.

Now if (as this author ſays) each of theſe perſons were to conſume annually a quarter of wheat per head, it would require 8,500,000 quarters to ſupply them; but this muſt be over-rated. A quarter of wheat has been ſtated in the Committee of the Houſe of Commons to average a ſack of flour, (even of ſeconds) and a ſack of this flour will make 80 quartern loaves; this would be at the rate of a loaf and a half per week, and two loaves more. The experience of the laſt year will prove that this was the full amount, (and more than in moſt pariſhes, where even no ſoup was given,

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and they wholly lived upon bread) of the conſumption of the poor in the country, where it is their chief article of food—of courſe much too high when you aſcend to higher ſpheres. Inſtead therefore of giving them a quarter each, I will allow the 8,500,000 conſumers—7,500,000 quarters, which is more than the weekly allowance of a loaf and a quarter per head.

Now according to this we muſt grow 7,500,000 quarters of wheat per ann. and whatever we grow leſs, muſt be either made up by importation, or ſaved, by the uſe of ſubſtitutes, or by reſtrained conſumption.

The land in preſent cultivation is ſtated as from 30 to 33 millions of acres—allowing for large woods, hedges, &c. &c. let us take the former. Now on the average of farms throughout the kingdom (for what we take away on account of the dairy farm, we muſt give to the common field farm, which is moſtly corn) one acre in ten may be reckoned as the proportion of wheat. This will make the quantity ſown in the kingdom three millions of acres; now multiply this by 3 the full average of the quarters grown per acre, through the kingdom, and in an abundant year, you will grow nine millions of quarters of wheat.

If the wants therefore of the inhabitants in the article of bread only, requires 7,500,000 quarters; there will be left, in an abundant year, 1,500,000 quarters.

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The foreign wheat imported in the four laſt years, averaged upwards of 500,000 quarters (one was a year of ſcarcity.) Now I will take the whole of this, and add it to the exceſs of growth, in a plentiful year, above the conſumption, and it amounts to 2 millions of quarters in hand. In this it will be recollected, that I have only allowed the amount of the flour imported, to ſupply the quantities of flour, biſcuit, (and even wheat) exported to our Weſt India iſlands. I have taken no notice of the additional conſumption, which the ſupplying part of our population, on board of ſhip, or on ſervice, will neceſſarily occaſion; nor the wheat uſed in the diſtilleries, ſtarch manufactories &c. &c. Now, with this ſtock, of 2 millions in hand, if the deficiency of the laſt harveſt was one third (it was at the leaſt that) let us ſee how the account would ſtand, on the 1ſt of September, 1800.

		Qrs.	*bu.*
Average Crop		9,000,000	
Stock in hand		2,000,000	
Imports, from 1ſt January, 1800, to 1ſt September ——	Wheat .	721,993	
	Rye . . .	10,194	3
	Qrs.	11,732,187	3

Deduc-

Deductions.	*Qrs.*
Deficiency of Crop, one third .	3,000,000
Annual Conſumption	7,500,000
Seed, at 2 buſhels per acre . .	750,000
	11,250,000

	Qrs.	*bu.*
Amount .	11,732,187	3
Deduction .	11,250,000	
Balance	*Qrs.* 482,187	3

So high as the crop of 1799 is here ſet, and ſo ill as it yielded in flour, theſe circumſtances muſt be conſidered as in a great meaſure counterbalancing the effect of the ſaving occaſioned by the limits of conſumption generally adopted. Theſe took place about Chriſtmas—Under all theſe circumſtances I will allow the ſaving from this to have been 400,000 quarters, this added to the balance, would leave at 1ſt September, 1800, a ſtock in hand of 882,187 quarters 3 buſhels,—a ſupply of ſomewhat more than 5 *weeks* conſumption!

If this be ſo, and we conſider an inſtant, ſhall we wonder at the high price of corn, on the 15th of that month, when little Engliſh wheat had (for the reaſons I have before given) been brought to market, and (perhaps) only *three weeks* ſupply of old in the kingdom? Can any man turn a moment in his mind, how imperceptible this quantity ſcat-

tered

tered throughout the kingdom would be, and how very like actual want this would appear, even to men who had the beſt information, and then can we for a moment be ſurprized at the price? With the proſpect of little corn from the farmers, and the knowledge of very ſmall importations going on (for ſince the 1ſt of September, there have been only 4 or 5 cargoes of wheat imported, of from 5 to 700 quarters each) there was no occaſion to call in the aid of artificial ſcarcity, to make the high price. Would it had been ſo! that would have been an evil of ſhort duration—but unfortunately the ſcarcity was too real. It is ſo now; and the proſpect is, that it will be ſo, even if this year's crop turns out well (which if I am to judge from the little I grew and have thraſhed out, is not the caſe) except ſome ſteps are taken to prevent it; and thoſe who talk of an artificial ſcarcity occaſioned by monopoly, talk of what they do not underſtand — they have given no attention to the ſubject, and in their turn deſerve no other, than to be reſtrained from doing miſchief by their opinions.

That there are cauſes, which have operated to increaſe this ſcarcity, cannot be doubted. The war has done ſo in a trifling degree, by the greater waſte (and ſome little addition in numbers) occaſioned by ſupplying our people, when they are from home—but it ſhould be known, that in times of ſcarcity the purchaſes of government are purpoſely

ſmall in quantity, to prevent the market being affected; amongſt the nonſenſe of the laſt ſummer (engendered I ſuppoſe as maggots are by the hot weather) are heard of the alarming purchaſes of government, from faces which alarmed you much more, till you knew the important ſecret. There is no time now for comment on this charge; nor any occaſion. Their purchaſes for 6 months, viz. from January to July were as follows:

Wheat 31,197 quarters
Biſcuits 74,296 hundred weight.
Flour 14,535 ſacks.

In wheat for ſix months, about *eleven days* ſupply of London only!

A circumſtance which has much more conſiderably tended to increaſe the ſcarcity, has been the *diſcouragement* the merchants have received; I do believe if they had been aſſured in September, that government would not have interfered with their ſpeculations, the moment they found the ſtate of our harveſt, they would have commenced their purchaſes of all the old corn they could have got from the northern powers, and in this caſe the difference even of 2 or 300,000 quarters would have been very material.

I know of nothing elſe which has materially contributed to this ſcarcity of corn; the remedies which muſt occur to every one, are, ſtrict œconomy in the quantity and ſtate in which we conſume it, and generous encouragement of importation, not

that

that kind of niggardly bounty, which leaves the merchant in doubt of ultimate profit, but either on a ſcale ſo liberal, as to enſure handſome profit, with tolerable ſucceſs and prudence; or by an aſſurance of indemnity for loſs, where it was not the conſequence of imprudence: I lay great ſtreſs upon this, becauſe I have ſome reaſon for believing that their ſpeculations generally have been attended with loſs in the courſe of the laſt ſummer. One can eaſily conceive that to many it muſt have been ſo: the merchant began his purchaſes in the early part of the ſpring at 3*l.* 15*s.* per quarter, he cloſed them at 5*l.* the average 4*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.*—his freight (taking the average of winter 12*s.* and ſummer 8*s.*) 10*s.*—inſurance (on the ſame average of winter 4*s.* and ſummer 2*s.*) 3 guineas *per cent.*—this is the expence before a grain arrives in port: in the condition a great part was in, (as I have before ſtated) the expences of landing, warehouſe-rent, kiln-drying, &c. &c. are to be added; when you have ſo done, and have ſtruck the balance of the account, how problematical will be his gains!

A great deal has been ſaid of a general incloſure bill, as an effectual means of removing the preſent ſcarcity. The immenſe number of private bills which have paſſed the legiſlature within theſe laſt ten years, and the little effect from them in any perceptible additional ſupply, make me leſs ſanguine than others as to the benefits to be derived in this view from the meaſure.

Allow that ſix millions more of waſte land were brought into cultivation, and one tenth ſet apart for the growth of wheat, 600,000 acres; if this ſhould average two quarters per acre, (I put it low, becauſe out of theſe ſix millions, there would be a great deal of land, which in the opinion of many would not grow a quarter of wheat per acre) the additional growth of wheat would be 1,200,000, quarters, from which take 150,000 quarters for ſeed, and there would remain for conſumption 1,050,000, not 320,000 quarters more than the importation of eight months of the preſent year, when we have juſt been enabled to go on, with ſcarcity, though without abſolute want. The population too, which would naturally be the conſequence of giving employment to the numbers wanted to bring this into cultivation, muſt of courſe be maintained from it. I am ſuppoſing a very moderate increaſe of numbers in putting them at 500,000, moſt likely it would be double that number.

I only ſtate this, to prevent ſanguine minds from imagining that if this meaſure took place, we ſhould be guarded againſt the evils of ſcarcity without importation; and who if they found that was not the caſe, would impute it to monopoly, or knavery, or ſomething different from what it was.

God forbid that I ſhould be thought adverſe to this great and neceſſary meaſure of a general incloſure; the real wealth of a country conſiſts in its inhabitants, and of all deſcriptions theſe are the moſt

moſt valuable. The adding to its numbers, and to the ſtock of national wealth and induſtry, by the cultivation of its waſte land is a delightful proſpect to look forward to! may we live to witneſs the ſpeedy accompliſhment of it!

Though it is no part of the object of this work (as I have before ſaid) to treat of any other ſpecies of proviſion than corn, let me be permitted before I conclude, to remark briefly on thoſe cauſes which appear in my judgment to create, or aſſiſt, the high price of proviſions in general. The price is a real and alarming evil, endangering the proſperity, and even the very peace of the country; by no deſcription of perſons is this evil more felt, than by thoſe who though they do not fill the very loweſt ſtations in life, are perhaps more ſenſible of the evil, and more incapable of enduring it than thoſe who do—With a ſcanty and very limited income, with no means in his power of increaſing it—uſed to better days, and ſubjected to worſe by no fault of his own—witneſſing daily, from the increaſe of taxes, and ſtill greater increaſe of the price of food, the deprivation of thoſe little comforts, which time has almoſt rendered neceſſaries, and which nature can ſcarce endure the loſs of—declining perhaps in years, as in comfort—he has the dreary proſpect of being juſt able to preſerve an exiſtence become ſcarcely valuable, from the impoſſibility of adding enjoyment to it. Such a character (and I fear there are many, very many, to be found at the inſtant I am writing)

living

living in a country, whoſe laws and liberties are the juſt theme of univerſal praiſe, is ſecluded by his neceſſities from the enjoyment of them, and ſeparated by the cruel bar of almoſt want from ſociety and happineſs: This man's caſe, however ſevere, is the natural effects *of the times*. Worthy as it is of legiſlative conſideration, I declare it ſeems to my mind, to baffle legiſlative interference, and almoſt to ſet at nought all the attempts of conſummate wiſdom and experienced legiſlation: there is one great meaſure, which if it removes not, may greatly leſſen the evil: I will preſently point it out.

Liſten not however to thoſe who would perſuade you that engroſſers, foreſtallers or regraters are the ſources from whence this calamity ſprings; the evil that ſuch men can poſſibly do, (allowing as is perhaps the truth, that in ſome articles theſe practices exiſt) depend on it, is limited in its extent and duration; it is not in their power to effect a *permanent and general ſcarcity*, by any arts or contrivances they have the power of uſing. The evil they do is not equal to that you would occaſion by any regulations or laws which you could deviſe in ſeeming wiſdom to ſtop their practices; if they were every one ſhipped off for Guiana, your ſituation might be worſe, but it could not be one whit better. Your demand treads cloſe on the heels of your ſupply, and the produce of the country keeps ſcarcely pace with its wants. This is the ſimple, but real truth—He who aſſigns any other, with the beſt intentions, is your very

worſt

worſt friend. Pauſe before you credit the poſſibility of any man "buying up all the articles in a "market, to deal them out to others at his plea-"ſure and profit."—If the higheſt authority in the nation was to tell me that this is no uncommon thing, I ſhould aſk him his authority for believing it.—If he were to aſk me "what Adam Smith "would have ſaid to the caſe of a rich man plant-"ing meſſengers at all avenues, and buying up "every thing coming to town, and thus raiſing pro-"viſions 50 per cent." I could not have ventured to ſay what would have been the reply of Adam Smith, I rather think he would have ſaid nothing, he would have only ſmiled—If he had attempted to account for this miracle, he muſt have ſuppoſed this Dives and his meſſengers, to have had the eyes of Argus, the hands of Briareus, and the purſe of Crœſus; he could have accounted for it no otherwiſe.

No, my fellow countrymen; the cauſes are not to be found in the arts of cunning, or the roguery of wicked men. The daily extended demands of an immenſe nation, are the cauſes. They are augmented (in ſome degree) by the war—by the increaſed population—by the collective riches and commercial proſperity of the nation, which has thrown into the enjoyment of luxuries, thoſe who were wont to be content with comforts, or neceſſaries—by the much greater quantity of graſs land appropriated for the keep of horſes than formerly—by the vaſt national

debt

debt—and laſt (though by no means leaſt in importance) by the almoſt unbounded iſſue of paper money, in a great meaſure the conſequence of the debt. That all, or ſome of theſe cauſes operate to increaſe the evil, no one can doubt—the laſt moſt certainly does. We may be ſure whilſt money is cheap, proviſion will be dear—that is, more of the money is required to obtain it. Thoſe who are in any way of buſineſs take care, when they part with the commodity they deal in, to demand ſuch a proportion of money for it, as they know will be demanded of them, when they in their turn go to make the exchange. The cheapneſs of the one, or the dearneſs of the other, to them is immaterial. But the man who has no means of procuring more of this money, than he could ten years ago, and who, when he goes to market, finds its value 50 per cent. leſs than it was, he muſt either have had an abundant deal more than he wanted at that time, or muſt be dreadfully inconvenienced now, to maintain himſelf and his family. No propoſition can be (unfortunately for the country) ſo ſelf evident. The time will not allow me to ſhew, the manifeſt connection between the debt and the paper circulation, and their joint effects (beyond imagination) on the increaſe of price—a few moments conſideration will convince any one of it.

Theſe are the cauſes undoubtedly which ſo greatly increaſe the ſcarcity—but how are they to

be

be removed. Many of them, whilſt we deplore their effects, we do not wiſh to remove, and others we cannot. The national debt muſt not be wiped off with a ſpunge, though it may have engendered the monſter of paper money. Certainly a 20 years peace would much decreaſe the debt, and of conſequence, the enormous ſize of this monſter; but whilſt he is merely loſing his fleſh, half the nation will be actually ſtarving. I know but one effectual and adequate remedy: In the true, liberal and manly ſpirit of commerce, open your ports to all the world—invite all nations to bring their ſurplus, or if they like money better, to give you their plenty. You would then have no occaſion to be giving bounties in order to procure food. You would ſoon witneſs comparative abundance. It might not be cheap with reference to ancient times, but it would be attainable by the loweſt income. Look at the Dutch, in the moſt proſperous ſtate of a republic founded in commerce—their ports were open to the world, and their ſubjects were fed with corn (and are to this day) cheaper than we can grow it.

The defalcation of the revenue, the people would be glad to repay—the benefit they would derive from the meaſure would enable them to do ſo.

I can conceive no other adequate and ſpeedy remedy for this monſtrous evil. Temporizing expedients ſuit not the diſeaſe—ſomething muſt be

done, and that ſhortly, or a very numerous and valuable claſs of your people, will quit your ſhores the firſt moment it is in their power, and ſeek in ſome leſs expenſive clime, thoſe comforts of life, which their limited fortunes cannot procure here.

Above all things however, whilſt we do remain inmates of the ſame ſhip, and prudence ſuggeſts to us the propriety of acceding to the being put on ſhort proviſions, let us not ſour the morſel that falls to our ſhare, by fooliſh murmurs againſt thoſe by whoſe provident care we have it at all. Let us reſign ourſelves to the will of Providence, who has thought fit (doubtleſs for wiſe tho' hidden purpoſes) to impoſe this calamity upon us. Let us not think that we ſhall be able to make even our allowance (ſhort as we may fancy it and grumble at it) laſt, if we unite not our energies, and exert in uniſon our beſt faculties, to keep the mariners quiet and content—and to obtain their cordial co-operation in working the veſſel into port. The ſhip has encountered many ſtorms, which have been weathered by the prudence of the crew, and the great and diſcerning judgment, and experience of thoſe, under whoſe direction they have acted. Let me then entreat you, if you value the future ſafety of the veſſel, which is ſtill far from port, and may have many ſtorms yet to weather—by the property you have in her—by that principle of ſelf preſervation we all acknowledge—and by that humanity due to your comrades, not to drive by your unjuſt reproaches

proaches and cruel ſuſpicions, thoſe men from the helm, who have hitherto managed it with a ſkill of which you are not aware, and with an attention to your ſafety that you dream not of.

To drop the metaphor, let me again, and again intreat you, that inſtead of increaſing the unmerited odium, with which the world has been too much inclined to load thoſe perſons who are the medium to convey their daily bread to them, you will henceforth conſider it your intereſt to protect them from the effects of it. When you hear of the great profits the trade have made by iniquitous monopoly, one ſhould expect inſtantly to ſee in its train, an aggregate of immenſe wealth. Where is it to be ſeen? Is there a body ſo numerous, whoſe capital employed is ſo beyond calculation, that is ſo little wealthy? If we talk of their guilt, where is the evidence in the convictions, or even proſecutions? and yet malice has been moſt induſtrious to diſcover it, I had almoſt ſaid to make it. Juſtice has been over keen, and high authority almoſt officiouſly urgent to purſue it. Retrieve then your error, I beſeech you, before it is too late. Inſtead of clouding the brow, and damping the ſpirits of theſe men, by ſevere and uncandid treatment, cheer them by your juſt encouragement—inſtead of foſtering the public prejudice, haſten to remove it if you can—inſtead of harraſſing them with proſecutions, or reviving obſolete ſtatutes which would diſguſt them, treat

them with the ſame liberal allowance, and give them the ſame freedom of conduct, as the reſt of their fellow creatures—inſtead of talking in a ſtrain of harſh imputation, of their vaſt capitals and unbounded monopolies, invite them to embark their capital in your ſervice, and protect them in the free and unreſtrained uſe of it—encourage thoſe monopolies you are ſo apprehenſive of—they will not be (they cannot be in this article) ſufficiently general to hurt you, and partially they will greatly aſſiſt you—they cannot monopolize to injure you, however they may themſelves—it muſt be in the end for your benefit. Attempt not to drive any one claſs from the trade, under the idea of its being uſeleſs, or of its raiſing the price upon you. In the preſent overgrown ſtate of your population, and of increaſed demand, you have more reaſon to applaud the wonderfully happy arrangement which exiſts for your regular and ample ſupply, (even in times of acknowledged great ſcarcity) than to diſturb its uſeful progreſs by your abſurd opinions, or more abſurd interference. Be aſſured there is not one man between the grower and conſumer who is not neceſſary to the regular and moſt œconomical perfection of ſupply. Attempt not then to break even one of thoſe well-formed links of the great and neceſſary chain, which connects the produce with the conſumption. There is not an uſeleſs one amongſt them—you cannot ſpare one—indeed you cannot.

Before

Before I conclude, let me deprecate any idea which might be haſtily formed from the tenor of my language, in this publication, that I am hoſtile to the intereſts of the poor; I have them as much at heart, and I feel for their diſtreſſes, as much as thoſe, who (perhaps carried away by their feelings for them) are encouraging them in dangerous error—I am giving the beſt and higheſt proof of my friendſhip and regard for them, by treating them with ſincerity. But whilſt I am warning them to avoid a conduct which will inevitably plunge the country in deep diſtreſs, and in its conſequences may convert ſcarcity into famine, I am not inſenſible to the claims which the poor have at this time (and in all times of ſcarcity) on the public for ſupplying that difference which exiſts between the price of their ſupport, and that of their labour. It ſhould be given to them in the liberal ſpirit of compenſation—as that which they are entitled to from the unavoidable circumſtances of the times—not as a charity which their perſonal want or misfortune has called for. I would even indulge (what is called) their whim for the colour of their bread; it conſtitutes nearly their whole food, and let them have it as they like. In every thing, even in innocent prejudice, ſhall they have my ſupport; but I cannot indulge them in the exerciſe of that, which I know and feel, will lead them, and perhaps with them, the nation, to ſudden and inevitable deſtruction.

I have

I have now done. I have effected my taſk, and long as I have been, I have compreſſed much which this very intereſting ſubject ſuggeſts. I am ſatiſfied my opinions and ſtatements as to the Trade are ſtrictly correct and true; and I do verily believe that the general principles I entertain, and which I have laid down in this work, are equally ſo—I feel the ſtrongeſt conviction in my mind of the truth of the propoſition, with which I ſhall conclude—*That the commercial proſperity of a great nation will be in proportion to the protection and encouragement which every man in it receives to employ his talents, his induſtry, and his property, in that line moſt conformable to his views, or inclinations.*

September 30th, 1800.

THE END.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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